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# **ISSUES IN THE SUBTITLING AND DUBBING OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE FILMS INTO ARABIC: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS**

**By**

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**A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

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**2010**

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates the problems that translators tend to face in the subtitling and dubbing of English-language films and television programmes into Arabic and suggests solutions for these problems. In the light of an examination of the generic features of audiovisual translation and of the particular cultural constraints inherent in translation for Arabic-speaking audiences, it is proposed that certain elements of translation theory can be useful in overcoming the technical and cultural barriers identified. This proposition is tested through analysis of the translation of three feature films, one television sitcom and an animation series that have been subtitled and dubbed into Arabic, with a particular focus on the translation of dialect, swear words, and humour. Technical, linguistic and cultural issues constitute a challenge to Arabic translators who need to deal with: 1) the limitations on screen such as space, time, lip and character synchronizations; 2) the issue of rendering English varieties into Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) and 3) the problem of culture which restricts them when they want to translate taboo expressions. This results in a loss (partial or complete) of the source film's message.

Each of the audiovisual works mentioned above was considered as a case study that was analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods. Interviews, experiments and a questionnaire were conducted in this respect to find answers to the research questions. The interviews aimed to gather evidence of how professionals translate, what problems they face, and what possible solutions they may suggest for them. The experiments and the questionnaire, on the other hand, were audience-focused tools in the sense that sample audiences watched and judged the ability of a translation both in subtitled and dubbed forms to deliver the message of a movie to them, and therefore, provided evidence on the relative effectiveness of different translation procedures. Based on this, solutions were both suggested and tested in terms of their viability to overcome the barriers that emerge during the subtitling and dubbing of dialect, swear words and humour into Arabic.

The findings show that translators have significant scope for improving the quality of their output, especially by adopting a more functional translation approach that can help them successfully deal with the difficulties inherent in this type of translation and make the translated dialogue have a similar effect on the target audience as that which the source text has on its audience.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AVT</b>	.....	Audio Visual Translation
<b>MSA</b>	.....	Modern Standard Arabic
<b>RP</b>	.....	Received Pronunciation
<b>SC</b>	.....	Source Culture
<b>SL</b>	.....	Source Language
<b>ST</b>	.....	Source Text
<b>TC</b>	.....	Target Culture
<b>TL</b>	.....	Target Language
<b>TT</b>	.....	Target Text

## SCHEME OF TRANSLITERATION

<p>ء..... ’</p> <p>ب..... b</p> <p>ت..... t</p> <p>ث..... th</p> <p>ج..... J</p> <p>ح..... ḥ</p> <p>خ..... kh</p> <p>د..... d</p> <p>ذ..... dh</p> <p>ر..... r</p> <p>ز..... z</p> <p>س..... s</p> <p>ش..... sh</p> <p>ص..... ṣ</p> <p>ض..... ḍ</p> <p>ط..... ṭ</p> <p>ظ..... ṣ</p> <p>ع..... ‘</p> <p>غ..... gh</p> <p>ف..... f</p> <p>ق..... q</p> <p>ك..... k</p> <p>ل..... L</p> <p>م..... m</p> <p>ن..... n</p> <p>ه..... h</p> <p>و..... w</p> <p>ي..... y</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Short Vowels</u></b></p> <p>ا.....a</p> <p>و.....u</p> <p>ي.....i</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>Long Vowels</u></b></p> <p>آ.....ā</p> <p>إ.....ī</p> <p>ؤ.....ū</p>
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## **DECLARATION**

This thesis results from my own work and has not been previously offered in candidature for any other degree or diploma.

## **COPYRIGHT**

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The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotations from it should be published without T. Alkadi's prior written consent and information derived from it should be acknowledged.

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## DEDICATION

*To Durham*



## PREFACE

The following conference papers developed from aspects of the research contained in this thesis:

ALKADI, T. (September, 2007a) Subtitling Film Dialects into Standard Arabic. *Translating Voices, Translating Regions*. Durham University.

ALKADI, T. (September, 2007b) Teaching Subtitling at Universities in the Arab World. *Interpreter and Translator Training and Assessment (NU-CITTA)*. Newcastle University.

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# *Chapter 1*

---

## **INTRODUCTION**

---

### **1.0 Overview of chapter**

---

This study tackles the issue of overcoming the difficulties faced by translation of English-language audiovisual dialogues into Arabic. The academic literature related to this topic is rich in terms of the number of published articles and books that discuss the translation of English-language audiovisuals into different languages, but references to those which are related to Arabic are fewer than ten and these cannot be said to cover issues that are of concern to practitioners. Therefore, this thesis sets out to investigate the current situation of audiovisual translation into Arabic, find out more about its barriers and suggest some solutions to these barriers where applicable. Qualitative, as well as quantitative, data sources are implemented under a case study methodology to focus on certain genres selected for this study, which adopts a functional translation approach to carry out its experiments.

This chapter introduces the objectives, nature and purpose of the study. But before we proceed, it should first be clarified that for the sake of this research, the terms ‘audiovisual translation into Arabic’ will be used throughout the thesis to generally refer to the subtitling and dubbing of English-language films, sitcoms and animations into Arabic. Moreover, and as the issue of culture will always be a reference point to discuss its influence on the translation of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic, the term ‘Arab culture’ in relation to ‘Western culture’ will be used in a broad sense. This is not to deny the fact that nothing is absolute in this regard. In other words, people have always connected Arabs with Islam for historical,

political and religious reasons, and Islam inevitably constitutes the most powerful influence on most of the social and cultural factors discussed in this study. This, however, does not mean that all Arabs are Muslims, or vice versa. In fact, there are Arabs who are Christians and Jews and who live in different Arab countries. Furthermore, it should also be understood that when we talk about culture, nothing is fixed or static. What is unacceptable today, and in any culture, could be acceptable tomorrow, and vice versa. For example, censorship on TV programmes was much stronger in the past than today. Also, the fact that Western culture is more tolerant of swear words and taboos than Arab culture does not mean that all westerners agree with this space of freedom given to people on TV to swear and breach taboos. Examples of how some countries in Europe and Latin America censor or euphemise swear words will be discussed in section 2.3.2.

Finally, and as far as the terms 'audiovisual' is concerned and which occurs frequently through the thesis, it is worth highlighting that the term refers here to materials that use sight and sound to present information or entertainment to the audience, and that the term 'audiovisual translation' refers to the translation of such material. On this occasion, and as far as dubbing is considered one method of this type of language transfer, it is necessary to point out that the term 'dubber' which will also be used in the thesis, refers to the person who carries out both the translation as well as the adaptation of a dubbed script to synchronize it with the lips' movements of the actors. In this sense, the term by no means refers to the actors who dub the source audiovisual material's characters or the adaptor who modifies the translated text to suit the lips' movements. It combines both jobs.

## **1.1 Objectives of the study**

---

The thesis seeks to examine such technical, cultural and linguistic barriers to audiovisual translation into Arabic, especially those related to the subtitling and dubbing of dialects, humour and taboo words. For example, and as far as the technical barriers are concerned, Fawcett (2003: 15-6) summarises the issue by saying that 'x' was left out because there was no space in the subtitles and that 'y' was substituted by another form of wording because of the need for lip synchronization. Other barriers are related to the fact that there is a gap between East and West, which is brought about by different religious, political, geographical,

linguistic and ideological factors which constitute what is known as culture. This gap makes the translation of swearing and taboo words, for example, or even jokes of sexual nature a complicated task.

In the Arab culture, which is shaped by Islam, which in turn has a huge impact on its ideology, swearing, religious and sexual taboos cannot be tolerated, especially on screen. They have to be euphemised or even omitted; a thing that may affect the message of the source text when translated into the TC. According to Faiq (2004: 11), this may affect the message of the source text which may be perceived in a different light, and the job of the translation which is to help to break down hierarchies between cultures and peoples becomes one which practices both domination and resistance. Similarly, Grosman (1992: 52) maintains that the translation simultaneously closes off the source text and opens new possibilities for its interpretation, something that compels the translator to a particularly attentive reading which presupposes a capacity to reflect on one's own interpretation and its culture-bound particularities.

Moreover, taking into consideration the linguistic differences between Arabic and English and that MSA, not colloquial, is the language used for subtitling, this puts restrictions on the translation of source dialects and humour as we will see in chapter 4. Even where dubbing is concerned, the linguistic barrier, let alone the technical ones, will still be present. Although dubbing gives the opportunity for using dialect to replace those of the ST, or to sound more realistic, and therefore enable the translator to convey the message of the ST, there is still a danger that the audience will not like or even understand the other dialects used in dubbing. Ivarsson (1992: 16) maintains that the screen presents constant visual reminders that the scene and the characters are distinctly foreign to the audience.

These issues will be examined in two stages. First, by analysing some of the data to highlight these barriers; second, by suggesting as well as testing the applicability and practicality of some solutions to these barriers. Such solutions will be implemented by employing a translation approach that facilitates the work of translators; by conducting experiments and a questionnaire; and by interviewing representatives from four of the pioneering subtitling and dubbing companies that can be considered as market leaders in the Arab world and in London.

The study will try to address all the above issues and concerns in an objective way that has not so far been used in previous studies of subtitling and dubbing into

Arabic. In other words, the research addresses issues of rendering dialects, swear words and humour into Arabic by adopting a methodology that guarantees an audience-focused approach in the sense that the audience contribute to the findings, together with the interviewees. It is hoped that the experiments and the questionnaire conducted will make the study and the results more authentic and useful.

## 1.2 Research questions

---

Fawcett (2003: 145) argues that because film translation operates under a number of technical constraints, it is often assumed that the final target text is largely conditioned by these constraints and nothing else. As the thesis discusses the difficulties of subtitling and dubbing of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic, the following five questions will be answered in order to investigate further the reasons for such problems and the possible solutions to them:

*Research Question 1* (refer to chapter 2 for full discussion):

Do translators of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic adopt any translation model or theory that best suits audiovisual translation and helps them best interpret the source audiovisual material's message? If not, what is the most suitable translation approach to achieve this?

- SOURCE OF DATA: Interviews and most of the experiments and the questionnaire that were carried out.

*Research Question 2* (refer to chapter 4 for full discussion):

As dialect features of source English-language audiovisuals are not usually rendered into equivalent ones in subtitling into Arabic due to the fact the subtitles are usually written in standard rather than colloquial Arabic, does this have any consequences on the audiovisual material's message? If yes, can this be avoided?

- SOURCE OF DATA: *Educating Rita*, interviews, an experiment and a questionnaire.

*Research Question 3* (refer to chapter 4 for full discussion):

To what extent does the translated audiovisual material's message tend to be affected by censorship? Can translation loss caused by censorship be minimized or compensated for?

- SOURCE OF DATA: *London to Brighton, Con Air*, interviews and an experiment.

*Research Question 4* (refer to chapter 4 for full discussion):

Regarding the subtitling of humour, can it have the same effect on the audience as that of the original, and what are the best strategies for achieving this?

- SOURCE OF DATA: *Friends*, interviews and an experiment.

*Research Question 5* (refer to chapter 5 for full discussion):

Can dubbing be an efficient solution to some of the obstacles that subtitlers face, such as the transfer of dialects, swear words and humour into Arabic?

- SOURCE OF DATA: *Con Air, The Simpsons*, interviews, an experiment and a questionnaire.

The general overall question that overarches the above five questions is:

- How the practicalities of audiovisual translation into Arabic are conditioned by the technical, cultural/ideological as well as translation conditions in which it is carried out?

The translation factor (Research Question 1) is indeed crucial to the industry of audiovisual translation into Arabic since it can be the key or solution or it can at least help in overcoming the difficulties that result from the ideological, cultural and/or technical constraints that are involved in the process and that may become a challenge to the translators. It is the translation that is supposed to absorb any cultural shocks or differences and filter anything that the target audience may not approve of. Yet, it is the same translation that is expected to entertain and leave an impact on the audience in the same way as the original text or audiovisual material does.

### 1.3 Rationale and motivation of the study

---

The growing demand for AVT into Arabic, especially film translation, fuelled by globalization, necessitates an assessment of today's booming industry. Subtitling and dubbing companies have always complained that they cannot find trained subtitlers and adaptors, even though the number of translators is rising. But, a translator is not a subtitler so it is necessary to know more about the way this profession functions and the way the message of the ST is conveyed into the TT, taking into consideration the cultural and linguistic challenges, as well as the technical ones. Companies usually carry out the task of training their own staff since there are no training courses at Universities in the Arab world to do so despite the fact that this industry is mushrooming day after day, especially in Lebanon and Egypt.

Furthermore, the increasing complaints from the audience against the inadequacies of some of the dubbed and subtitled films, cartoons, and sitcoms to reflect the message of the ST were also noticed. The internet has provided ways for viewers to express their points of views which can be found in chat rooms and blogs. 'Angry' bloggers raise the issue of the many 'scandals' that take place in subtitling and dubbing into Arabic, such as 'exaggerated' censorship, including cuts, the inability of MSA to reflect the different registers and humour of the ST in subtitling, and the inadequacy of colloquial Arabic for dubbing films and cartoons. Examples of these will follow in the coming chapters.

Added to all this is the fact that there is a growing awareness on the part of producers and TV programmers who are buying, broadcasting and/or distributing such translated audiovisual entertainment programmes that the failure of any translation project may affect their reputation and disadvantage them financially or competitively. As a result, it is the responsibility of AVT companies to do more research in this regard.

Moreover, in view of the fact that this industry has received little attention either from theorists or practitioners has created a need to conduct a study that lays out a foundation for and encourages more research. Apart from a few articles and a single Master's thesis so far, which will be detailed in chapter 2, no one can claim that this issue has been seriously addressed, whether on the academic or professional levels. This could be attributed to many factors, among which is the fact

that one of practitioners' aims is to make money and that the theorists of translation do not regard this language transfer method as translation but rather adaptation. Thus little attention has been paid to it. Therefore, and for the sake of this research, it is necessary to show the reader where audiovisual translation and translation theory stand. A common approach in translation theory that can be useful to audiovisual translation into Arabic will also be suggested in chapter 2.

## **1.4 Overview of the thesis**

---

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following this introduction, the literature review chapter presents an overview of what has so far been written about subtitling and dubbing in relation to translation theory as well as the translation of dialects, swear/taboo words, and humour. We see how these types of translation problems have been dealt with by theorists and professionals alike so that we can learn from them and illustrate how this study is going to add to this field. The chapter also introduces and defines both subtitling and dubbing.

Chapter three discusses the methodology that the thesis adopts in order to answer the questions. It gives a justification for choosing the design and methods of this research. The interviews, the questionnaire and the experiments chosen to be part of the methods have been used as complementary methods to help enhance reliability and validity. Each of these methods helps to compensate for the limitations of each other. Furthermore, the chapter gives details about the data to be analyzed from the case studies, the way in which the experiments and the questionnaire were done, and the numbers and types of participants. It also presents the questions that were asked to the interviewees. Finally, it explains how the interviews are to be integrated and analyzed throughout the research.

Chapter four begins the presentation of the findings of the research. It discusses the barriers to subtitling such as the difficulty of transferring the ST dialects, swear words and humour. Each of these barriers is investigated through analyzing three case studies that include two films and a sitcom that have been subtitled into Arabic. Then, the practicality of the solutions suggested to overcome such barriers is tested by carrying out an experiment for each suggestion or case study.



Chapter five discusses dubbing as a solution to the above-mentioned barriers through conducting an experiment and a questionnaire. It also reveals the obstacles to dubbing into Arabic and on its inherent suitability for overcoming the barriers to subtitling. The chapter discusses the issue of dubbing into colloquial Arabic which is believed to be more efficient in transferring the ST message into the TL than subtitling. To test this hypothesis, the chapter analyses and conducts experiments on two other case studies, one of which is a film and the other is an animation show dubbed into Egyptian.

Finally, chapter six locates the findings of this study in relation to existing studies. Moreover, it also takes into consideration the limitations of the findings and suggests ideas for further research. Last, it offers a brief conclusion to the study which stresses the fact that the quality of audiovisual translation into Arabic can indeed be improved to a great extent by following crucial and costless procedures.

---

## *Chapter 2*

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### **LITERATURE**

---

#### **2.0 Overview of chapter**

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The aim of this chapter is to outline the methods that have been adopted by translators to deal with different translation issues that arise from the subtitling and dubbing of English-language audiovisuals into different target languages. It assesses the relevance and usefulness of the sources that may be beneficial to this project which will be situated within the existing field. Related literature is organized into five basic foci concerned with the objectives of this research. First, the chapter presents the literature relating to translation theory in relation to audiovisual translation; how theory and practice interrelate and the effect of the theory of translation on the quality of audiovisual translation. Second, it handles the issues of subtitling of dialects, swear words and humour. Third, the literature relating to quality subtitling is also examined. Although this part of the literature is not directly related to the research questions, it provides insights into what helps make good subtitles. Fourth, the literature relating to dubbing in general is discussed in order to uncover its pros and cons so that they can be related to the failure or success of films dubbed into Arabic in chapter 5. Last, literature relating to the comparison between subtitling and dubbing is summarised in order to further investigate which one is favoured by the audience and why.

#### **2.1 Introduction**

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The issues of applying theoretical approaches drawing upon translation theory in translating audiovisuals, transferring dialect into target standard or colloquial

varieties, toning down or censoring swear words, and preserving the humour of the ST in the TT are not issues that are limited to audiovisual translation into Arabic but are rather international ones that face translators worldwide. However, it is likely that a subtitler subtitling an English-language film, for example, into German faces fewer difficulties than one subtitling the same film into Arabic. A European subtitler has more options in this regard. Not only do the languages have similarities but so does the culture, something which has an advantage when it comes to translating humour or even swearing. Similar cultures, even with different languages, usually share puns and cultural/sexual references, the basic components of humour. Moreover, when it comes to swearing, it will be noticed how Spanish subtitlers, for example, have more freedom in subtitling obscene language than do Arabs, although they would still filter such words before they reach the audience. What can be said about subtitling can also be said about dubbing, although subtitling seems to have attracted more attention than dubbing for reasons that we will discuss in the last section of this chapter.

Finally, it has to be confessed that the literature in this chapter has got little to do with dubbing and subtitling into Arabic. As mentioned earlier, the literature that has been published dealing with translation of audiovisuals into Arabic, although appreciated, is not really significant. Thanks are owed to Zitawi (1995, 1999, 2003), Khuddro, (2000, 2009), Maluf (2005), Mazid (2006), and Jamal (2008a) who tried to lay the ground for the study of this kind of language transfer. Therefore, in this study it is hoped to bridge what the literature has failed to cover such as the issues of translating humour and dialect. The beginning will be with the literature related to how translation theory can be used to seek a better quality translation of audiovisuals.

## **2.2 Translation theory and audiovisual translation**

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Delabastita's (1989) model is one of the earliest and most important in AVT that tried to frame film translation within translation theory. He claims that his model “.. is an organized inventory of questions and hypotheses that should direct any future work” (1989: 194) and that film establishes a multi-channel (acoustic and visual channels) and multi-code (the verbal, the literary and theatrical, the cinematic code, politeness codes, moral codes, and so forth) type of communication. Any transfer of film signs

from the source to the target set of codes needs to respect the material parameters within which any such translation process is necessarily accomplished. He then puts a scheme of potential translational relationships between a source film and a target film.

Delabastita attempts to identify a complex interactive group of related norms by compiling a checklist of questions which summarise the foundations of his research model proposals and which Chaume (2002: 7) sums up as follows: 1) What is the position of the TC in the international context, in social, political, economic and other terms? 2) What cultural relationships does the TC maintain with the source culture? 3) What cultural constraints does the TC impose upon the translator? 4) What are the intentions of the client who requested the translation with respect to the translated text (time and place of broadcasting, for example)? 5) What tradition does the TC have with regard to types of text? 6) What degree of openness exists in the TC? 7) What is the linguistic policy of the TC? Finally, and of great importance: 8) Do the genre of the source culture, the values expressed in it, the rhetorical argumentation used, the different linguistic, stylistic, cultural and filmic models, the degrees of intertextuality and so forth exist in the TC? According to Delabastita:

If the study of actual translation performance is guided by these and similar questions, the scholar will gradually be enabled to formulate his hypotheses concerning the motivations behind the translator's behaviour. (1989: 210).

Fawcett (1996: 71) proposes that despite the fact that this model renders further modelling unnecessary by covering all the possibilities to be found in film translation, the model is considered as post-operative rather than predictive.

Brodweel's (1994) model briefly mentioned three translating problems: the inevitable reductions of the ST; the problem of readability; and the problem of equivalence as the subtitles should sound like their spoken equivalents. Regarding the latter, Brodweel reminds the reader of the three levels of equivalence and their requirements: in informative equivalence it should be made clear that all the information has been transferred to the TL; in semantic equivalence the meaning should be transferred correctly; and in communicative equivalence the subtitle has to transfer the communicative dynamism of the SL.

Fawcett (1996: 72) sees this approach as messy since it does not help the subtitler search for equivalences which will fit the constraints of each given situation. Not only that, it has also to be pointed out that the three levels of equivalence that Brondeel suggests are difficult to fulfil due to the cultural and linguistic barriers that exist between Arabic and English.

Fawcett's (1996: 70) approach is in favour of finding a link between film translation and translation theory, maintaining that recent approaches to film translation are still at the modelling stage, meaning that it has not reached the stage where it can be dealt with by the translation theory. He started with the theory of 'equivalence' which seems to be limited in a domain that imposes some constraints. Such constraints are related to synchronization and 'cultural pressures' as he calls them. When the translator is free of these constraints or pressures, the translation becomes more functional-dynamic. But it would still be difficult to seek equivalence at the stylistic level. Likewise, Gottlieb, as quoted in Fawcett, claims that equivalence in film translation is always sought at speech-act level. This is why "a full translation of the spoken discourse in films and television is seldom desirable" (ibid: 74). One advantage of equivalence theory is that it allows us to spot the mistakes that occur in the translation process.

With regard to 'relevance' theory, Fawcett (ibid: 79) quotes what Hesse-Quack proposed in this regard. He proves that in film translation the message is far from always being conveyed, with a variety of adaptations to a different cultural context in order to avoid incomprehension in the audience or unwieldy explanations by the translator, the result of such procedures being presumably to offer adequate contextual effects, which is the aim of relevance. But in the end, as Fawcett puts it: "it is obvious that what appears in a translated film will follow the principle of what the translator deems to be relevant in the complex of symbols with which he or she is dealing at any given moment" (ibid: 80).

Despite the fact that relevance theory pays attention to the target text and audience, Fawcett did not clarify how this theory helps in dealing with such complex features as taboos and cultural references, especially when they have no bearing on the target culture. Moreover, Gutt (1992: 24) maintains that the more contextual effects an utterance achieves with an audience, the more relevant it will be to that audience. But in fact, the nature of AVT requires a condensation of contextual utterances for the technical reasons that were detailed in the previous chapter.

As far as Toury's (1980) 'polysystems' theory is concerned, Fawcett (1996: 80) comments that films, like literature, can be seen as a set of systems in an ideological context. In translation, they are transferred into a different ideological context and a set of systems which may be differently structured and valued at the moment of transfer. Finally, Fawcett proposes that power and ideology and the effect of society are also to be considered in film translation. Violence, sex and swearing all come in for social control in the translation of films.

Although Toury's theory had an important impact on translation theory, it concentrates on literary texts and modifications have to be made if this theory is to be applied to AVT. Moreover, Karamitroglou (2000: 98) maintains that Toury's parameters/factors which he investigated are not part of a general project or strategy as he neglects the vital role of the recipients and puts much unnecessary emphasis on the source languages/systems.

Jaskanen (2001) suggests equivalence as an option for film translation in the sense that the audience usually expects a translation close to the original. As a result, since the concept of faithfulness is implausible due to the constraints imposed by AVT translation, equivalence seems to be an acceptable alternative, according to Jaskanen. She argues, however, that this does not work all the time as viewers sometimes have different opinions from the translator's. She quotes part of a reader's letter to the editor of 'Katso' that reads: "One should, in my opinion, translate clever wordplay so that the meaning of the sentence is retained and the joke is lost and not try to force a Finnish-language wordplay and lose the whole plot in the process."

Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007) talk about AVT with reference to subtitling. They do not adopt a specific model or theory of translation which might be applied to this kind of language transfer. They talk about the translation of marked speech such as dialect, the translation of culture-bound terms, songs, swearwords, and humour as was detailed in the literature. Some of the strategies that the authors recommend for subtitling culture-bound issues are loan, calque or literal translation, explicitation, substitution, transposition, lexical recreation, compensation, omission and addition. All these strategies are noticeably related to translation in general and not to AVT and cannot be said to constitute a model. They were also suggested by Karamitroglou (1997), as mentioned above, as well as by Dickins et al (2002: 21-25).

As far as audiovisual translation into Arabic is concerned, it can be said that, theoretically speaking, the only attempt, so far, to suggest a guideline for the translation of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic was Mazid's (2006). He believes that chunking<sup>1</sup>, suggested by Katan (1999: 147), is frequently used by translators as a method to hide incompetence, as he terms it, when dealing with the translation of culturally specific terms such as wordplays, proverbs and taboos in subtitling. He then suggests that translators should rather use Oltra Ripolls' (2005: 89-90) recommendations, especially when dealing with obscene language. These take into consideration: 1) the status of the TC in an international context; 2) the relationship between the TC and the SC; 3) the cultural restrictions on translators; 4) clients' intentions and requirements; and 5) the flexibility of the target culture and its linguistic policies. This is in fact similar to polysystem theory which was mentioned above and which pays more attention to the target text. The recommendations, however, seem to be too general and do not give the translator any guidelines on how to deal with issues that are related to taboos, humour and/or dialect in the sense that there is no mention of the functions of both the ST and TT and how they shall be realized.

Practically speaking, professionals who were interviewed were asked about a model or theory that they rely on in audiovisual translation. Their answers were surprising. Hayek (see Appendix E), for instance, argued that: "Any literal translation will mean the failure of a film. So, the concentration should be on the message that the film wants to deliver rather than the words". Similarly, Khuddro (see Appendix A) maintained that: "Only 20% of the source text is translated literally and the rest is the general meaning of the message. The meaning is what matters for me rather than the literal translation of the text." Kaadi (see Appendix D) put it clearly: "No, we do not rely on any particular theory". Finally, Baradhi (see Appendix C) preferred not to answer the question.

Not adopting any translation theory, model or decisions may result in a disorganised translation and consequently in a loss of the source text's message. Defining the aim of a translation and the way to reach that aim is crucial. From what we saw in the previous section, there seems to be a tendency among professionals

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<sup>1</sup> Chunking is a method proposed by Katan (1999). Katan proposed changing the size of something by chunking it down: from general to specific, chunking it up: from specific to general, or chunking it sideways: using an equivalent or a synonym.

and theorists alike to use the equivalence approach. Although this approach remains central in the theory of translation, it raises certain issues that need to be highlighted. As Svejcer, who is quoted in Gut (1992: 35), maintains: "Equivalence is one of the central issues in the theory of translation and yet one on which linguists seem to have agreed to disagree". For instance, as Dickins et al (2002: 19) argue that there is a danger that Nida's 'dynamic equivalence', for example, might be seen as giving carte blanche for excessive freedom which entitles the translator to write what sounds good and reflects the content of the ST. Moreover, according to James Holmes as quoted in Bassnett (2002: 34-5), the issue of equivalence is 'perverse', since to ask for sameness is to ask too much. Furthermore, Bassnett (ibid: 34) argues that translation involves far more than the replacement of lexical and grammatical items between languages and, as can be seen in the translation of idioms and metaphors, the process may involve discarding the basic linguistic elements of the SL text... But once the translator moves away from close linguistic equivalence, Bassnett maintains, the problems of determining the exact nature of the level of equivalence aimed for begin to emerge.

To exemplify, Antonopoulou (2004: 236) gave an example about how the Greek translator of Chandler's novel "Trouble is my Business" (1950) translated the following sentence, in her search for an equivalent effect. The sentence constitutes Marlowe's response to a visitor's comment that his curtains need cleaning: 'I'll send them out come St, Swithin's Day'. According to Antonopoulou, the relics of St, Swithin were supposed to have been taken to a shrine on July 15, 971 when unusually heavy rain made the project impossible not only for that particular day but also for the following 40 days. Because of this, source culture tradition has it that if it rains on July 15, it will keep raining for the next 40 days. The Greek translation of this sentence back translates into English as: 'I will send them (on) All Saints' (day)'. The noun phrase 'All Saints' Day' does not imply the same message that 'St, Swithin's Day' does. However, contextually speaking, there is a clear indication that the curtains are never going to be sent to the cleaners. But Antonopoulou suggests that 'St, Swithin's Day' is made explicit in the TT by replacing it with 'St, Never's Day' in order to have a more humorous effect on the target audience.

Indeed, as Baker (1992: 49) puts it, equivalence is influenced by a variety of linguistic and cultural factors and is therefore always relative. Similarly, Newmark (1988: 49) maintains that the more cultural a text, the less conceivable is the



equivalent effect unless the reader is imaginative, sensitive and steeped in the SL culture. But whether it is culture, the translator, or the reader to blame, the issue of equivalence remains debatable. Miao (2000: 204) points out that the principle of equivalent effect is not an operational and feasible notion and has its limitations. Likewise, as Pym (2007: 291) expresses it:

Gone is the kind of re-creative equivalence that was once allowed for by the hunt for the natural nuance; gone is the directional creativity by which translators consciously introduced the new. Instead, equivalence returns to ensure the imposition of controlled patterns on all cultures. And it does so at a time when the metalanguage of equivalence has lost its exploratory and critical force.

We will also see in 2.3.3 how both Jaskanen (2001) and Grun and Dollerup (2003) do not recommend the equivalence approach, especially in the translation of humour, since the wider the gap is between two cultures the more difficult it is to look for equivalence, especially when a translated text is limited in space and time on screen. Moreover, Koller (1995: 212) argues that of fundamental importance is the translation's double linkage: first to the *source text* and secondly to the *communicative conditions* on the *receiver's* side. The issue of communicative conditions is important when it comes to applying equivalence to screen translation where different factors play a role. Time and space limitations, culture, and censorship affect the nature of equivalence, especially when we talk about audiovisual translation into Arabic. As a result, an approach that takes these issues into consideration and yet delivers the message of the audiovisual material will be suggested next.

### 2.2.1 Applying the functional approach: skopos theory

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Although translation theory may facilitate translators' work, the quality of a translation is not in fact measured by the extent to which theory was applied or utilized by a translator at the time of translating a certain text. Similarly, it could also be argued that it is likely that audiovisual translation practitioners are implicitly following a theoretical model even if they do not acknowledge it. The fact that some of the

interviewees (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E) argued that the concentration was on the message of the source film in the first place rather than on the text indicates that a rather pragmatic equivalence approach is used by practitioners without being aware of this.

Bassnett (2002: 83) maintains that the degree to which the translator reproduces the form, metre, rhythm, tone, register, etc. of the SL text, will be as much determined by the TL system as by the SL system and will also depend on the function of the translation. One of the approaches that paid attention to the function of the translated text is the functional one. It links function, linguistic dimensions and the communicative situations in which they are implemented, as well as being one of the first approaches in translation that took into consideration 'audiomedial' texts. Therefore, as this study deals with AVT and tackles the translation of different film genres, it was thought that it would be worth examining the suitability of such an approach to audiovisual translation into Arabic.

Nord (1994: 62) maintains that the framework of a functional approach justifies any transfer procedure which leads to a functional target text, that is, cultural adaptation, paraphrase, expansion, reduction, modulation, transposition, substitution, loanword, *claque*, literal translation, or even omission. It is the aim of the translation that decides. The functional approach which started in Germany in the 1970s and 1980s was considered a shift from the linguistic typologies of translation. The pioneers of this school were Reis (1981/2004), Holz-Mänttari (1984), Vermeer (1989/2004) and Nord (1988/2005). Reis wrote about text types and their relation to the functions and translation strategies as we will see. Holz-Mänttari considered translation a human interaction that has a purpose and which involves more than one player. Nord's approach to functional theory pays more attention to the ST while Vermeer's *skopos* theory basically relied on the purpose of the TT.

*Skopos*, meaning 'purpose' or 'aim' in Greek, is considered part of the functional approach and was introduced into translation theory in the 1970s by Hans J. Vermeer. The reason why *skopos* theory is considered part of the functional approach is that it aims at producing a functionally appropriate TT or *translatum* as Vermeer terms it. In other words, as Flynn (2004: 271) argues, the reason why this theory is an example of the functional approach is that it anchors translations in their socio-cultural contexts and views translated texts from within such contexts. According to Nord (1997: 12), it was developed as the foundation for a general

theory of translation able to embrace theories dealing with specific languages and cultures. Moreover, Munday (2008: 80) proposes that one important advantage of skopos theory is that it allows the possibility of the same text being translated in different ways according to the purpose of the TT and the commission which is given to the translator. But to understand more how this theory functions, it is important to understand its mechanisms.

According to Reiss and Vermeer, as quoted in Munday (ibid: 80), there are six rules for this theory: 1) A *translatum* or (TT) is determined by its skopos; 2) A TT is an offer of information in a target culture and TL concerning an offer of information in a source culture and SL; 3) A TT does not initiate an offer of information in a clearly reversible way. This means that the function of the *translatum* in the target culture is not necessarily the same in the source culture. It is expected to function in a new language and culture. Rules 4 and 5 are related to cohesion and fidelity in the sense that the translated text must be coherent for the TT audience; 6) The five rules above stand in hierarchical order, with the skopos rule predominating.

As can be seen, *translatum* is what this theory pays attention to. It is, then, essential that the translator knows both the purpose of the ST and the function of the TT which affect the choice of the methods and strategies used in translation. Vermeer (p. 236) argues that the skopos of a translation is therefore the goal or purpose, defined by the commission and, if necessary, adjusted by the translator. The *realizability* of a commission depends on the circumstances of the target culture, not on those of the source culture (Vermeer's italics). The translator adjusts the commission according to both the purpose and the target culture. This means that attention is paid less to the ST and more to the TT. It is the function of the TT which determines the language of the translation.

Audiovisuals are normally shot for many different reasons or functions among which are to entertain, to address a certain issue, to educate, and to make money. So, the first step for the translator is to know what kind of audiovisual material s/he is translating so that the skopos of the TT are met. To illustrate, Nedergaard-Larsen (1993: 221) divides visual media into genres and emphasises that in comedy the language is central, in feature films people are central, and in documentaries events are central. This classification of genres helps the translator find the function of the film to be translated. Moreover, building on Nedergaard-Larsen's division of genres, Karamitroglou (1996: 45) states that in fiction, dialects, sociolects and speech

variants should be reproduced in some way; in romance, the audience need to follow the atmosphere rather than the dialogue, unlike the case in crime stories where details are significant. In action films, the translator has to restrict his/her product to leave viewers' eyes free to follow the more important 'dynamic' information on the screen. Finally, when translating comedies, care needs to be taken to ensure efficient harmonisation of the verbal joke with a possibly funny element on the screen.

But to specify the genres of films is only the first step along the way. There are other challenges which make the translator's decision with regard to the function of the TT more difficult. They emerge from the nature of film translation, especially subtitling, which puts restrictions on the freedom of translators. It is in fact argued whether the intention of a translator can change the function of a film when dealing with this type of language transfer. The fact that the source material is apparent on screen makes it hard to do so. Therefore, however the translator tries to hide points for whatever reasons, s/he will not succeed since a clash of intentions between ST and TT may occur. This, however, does not mean that changes are not possible. In fact, they are possible or even necessary, depending on the nature of the source material and the target culture, as will be explained later. It can also be said that functions can be affected by other factors such as the needs of viewers as well as space, time and cost restrictions. The needs of the audience are specified according to the functions of the ST. That is, as long as the functions of the ST are known to the target audience and the subtitles can be read easily (and the dubbing is convincing) then there is no reason why the translation should not be successful. But if the original aims are not known to the target audience, then they should be made known (see Nedergaard-Larsen, 1993: 223).

The dynamism which skopos theory allows and which gives a green light to translators to translate texts according to the purpose of the TT and the commission given by clients is criticized by Nord (1994: 63) for being a very general rule which does not account for specific conventions prevalent in a particular cultural community. She describes this as 'the end justifies the means', a phrase which means that the translator is free to choose any translation skopos for a particular source text. For that reason, Nord (1988/2005), (1997) suggests the concept of loyalty to solve this problem which means that, providing the intentions of the original author are not contradicted, the translation's end may justify the means. Vermeer

(1989/2004: 237) replies by asserting that the theory in no way claims that a translated text should conform to the target culture's behaviour or expectations and that a translation must always 'adapt' to the target culture as was mentioned in rules 4-5 above.

After all, the key to the functional approach in audiovisual translation is to start with the genre. Once it is identified, the translator can go ahead and produce a translation that fulfils the functions of the translated material and is acceptable to the target audience, culturally speaking. In other words, the functional approach gives the translator the space to translate the swear words of the source text by euphemising them and making them acceptable to the target audience. It also allows him/her to deal with humour in a way that elicits laughter in the target audience and yet bridges the cultural differences. Moreover, this should not be considered as a breach of rules 4/5 above with regard to fidelity. What is being done here is minimizing the number of taboo words used rather than deleting the swear words altogether. This will be dealt with in more detail in chapter 4, but it may be useful to give an example of what we mean. For instance, the word 'butt' will be replaced in Arabic by 'المؤخرة' or 'back'. This is similar to saying that something which is not pretty must be ugly.

Now that we have an idea about the application of theory to the practice, it is time that we move to the practice itself to see how the issue of dialects, swear words and humour are dealt with. The start will be with subtitling.

## 2.3 Subtitling

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Vöge (1977: 120) defines subtitling as a printed translation of the film dialogue which is projected simultaneously near the bottom of the screen. Moreover, Luyken et al (1991: 31) define subtitles as condensed written translations of original dialogue which appear as lines of text, usually positioned towards the foot of the screen. Subtitles appear and disappear to coincide in time with the corresponding portion of the original dialogue and are almost always added to the screen image at a later date as a post-production activity. Furthermore, Ivarsson & Carroll (1998: 4) uses the term "subtitles" for texts which represent what is being said (whether they are visible, 'open' subtitles or 'closed' teletext which can be added to the picture when the viewer so wishes). In addition, Assis Rosa (2001: 213-4) suggests that subtitling

involves intersemiotic and interlingual translation. It is intersemiotic because it transfers to written verbal language a source text which corresponds to face-to-face communication, and interlingual because it is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language. Finally, Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 8) subtitling as a translation practice that consists of presenting a written text, generally on the lower part of the screen, that endeavours to recount the original dialogue of the speakers, as well as discursive elements that appear in the image, and the information that is contained on the soundtrack.

The following literature discusses the issue of culture and the way it affects subtitling. It shows the extent to which a subtitler is able to apply theory to practice in this regard, especially when s/he is dealing with the transfer of an audiovisual message into a written one. It presents actual examples that are taken from films or sitcoms that have been subtitled from English into other languages such as Arabic, Spanish, German, and Finnish, and so on. The cultural issues that this literature concentrates on are mainly related to dialect, swear words and humour as was already mentioned.

### **2.3.1 Subtitling dialects: spoken into written?**

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It has been noted that language varies according to whether it is written or spoken. Written English is in many cases more formal than spoken English, and the same can be said about other languages including Arabic. So how is it possible to reflect less formal or informal English language in a formal Arabic style when film translation into Arabic, especially subtitling, is done into MSA? Before we answer this question, it is important to understand the mechanism of both dialects or language varieties of English and Arabic.

Dickins et al (2002: 165) argue that sociolect is defined in terms of sociological notions of class, and that sociolectal features can convey important speaker-related information. Consequently, if they are salient features of the ST, the translator cannot ignore them. And as MSA cannot really be said to have different sociolects, the situations of Arabic is referred to as one of diglossia. Diglossia, as Dickins et al maintain, can be defined as a situation where two varieties of a language co-occur throughout a community of speakers, each having a distinct range of social functions. In other words:

Diglossia is a relatively stable language situation in which, in addition to the primary dialects of the language (which may include a standard or regional standards), there is a very divergent, highly codified (often grammatically more complex) superposed variety, either of an earlier period or in another speech community, which is learned largely by formal education and is used for most written and formal spoken purposes but is not used by any sector of the community for ordinary conversation (Hudson, 1996: 49-50).

This means that the two main language varieties, the standard and the colloquial in Arabic, are usually spoken by everyone in a certain community regardless of social class. This is in fact the main difference between dialects in English and Arabic. In any case, and as Dickins et al put it:

In many cases, dropping ST dialect features is likely not to incur very damaging translation loss. If it does, but there seems no reasonable way of using dialect in the TT, the important ST effects produced by dialect will probably have to be rendered through compensation. One technique is to make occasional additions; e.g. '[...] she said in a thick Tangiers accent (2002: 67).

What the authors suggest is more effective in written translation, for example, but not in subtitling where time and space on screen are limited.

Other issues that have to do with spoken utterances and which may face subtitlers are related to hesitation, repair, turn over, simultaneous utterances, overlapping utterances, contiguous utterances, doubt and so on (see Schegloff, 1984). For the time being, the issue of the characteristics of dialects and how they affect the translation of audiovisuals will be dealt with in the following sections.

#### **2.3.1.1    *Dialects and class***

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According to Haugen (1966: 923), the word 'dialect', which is closely related to sociolect defined above, came from Greek and the distinction between language and dialect was developed in Greek because of the existence of a number of clearly distinct varieties in use in classical Greece, each associated with a different area and

used for a different kind of literature. The French word '*dialecte*' refers only to regional varieties that are written and have a literature. Francis, as quoted in Lodge (1993: 15-6), defines dialects as varieties of a language used by groups smaller than the total community of speakers, and that the relationship between dialect and language is inclusive rather than exclusive. Accent, on the other hand, is defined by Hughes and Trudgill (1996: 7) as "your way of pronouncing your 'language' when you speak it, unlike the notion of dialect which usually embraces pronunciation as well as syntax and lexis."

Zabalbeascoa (1997: 328) argues that many theories of translation concentrated on morphological, semantic and syntactic issues and ignored issues related to communication, language variation as well as the combination of verbal and non-verbal elements. Mathews (1979: 47) maintains that there is no real distinction to be drawn between language and dialect (except with reference to prestige where a language has a prestige that a dialect lacks). Hughes and Trudgill (1996: 6) found this hardly surprising since the Standard English dialect is spoken natively by British people who can be regarded as being at the top of the social scale, in the sense that they have more money, influence, education and prestige than people lower down the social scale.

As Altano says (1988: 152), the existence of class dialects is a consequence of the divisions and conflicts between classes. Similarly, Guy (1988) proposed that the social evaluation of language differences between people obviously depends directly on differences of power, status, education, and class.

To exemplify, Trudgill (1983: 34) gives examples of two speakers who utter the same sentences differently:

**-Speaker A:**

I done it yesterday

He ain't got it

It was her what said it

**-Speaker B:**

I did it yesterday

He hasn't got it

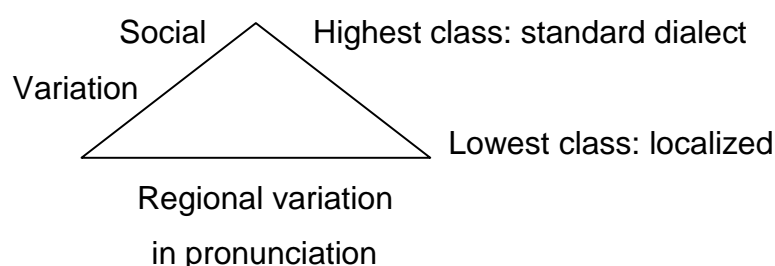
It was her that said it

If we heard A and B utter these sentences, we would guess that B is of a higher social status, since different social groups use different linguistic varieties, i.e., sociolects. This is what Hughes and Trudgill call social class dialects, which show clear grammatical as well as phonetic and phonological differences: "People speak



different kinds of English depending on what kind of social background they come from, so that some Liverpool speakers may sound ‘more Liverpudlian’ than others.” (1996: 2).

Moreover, as Hughes and Trudgill put it: “The higher people are on the social scale, the less regionally marked will be their accents, and the less they will differ from RP<sup>2</sup>.” (ibid: 2). What is more interesting is the example they give on page 40 to indicate language change according to social class in the form of a triangle. In Figure 2.1 below, rural old-fashioned dialects varieties associated with groups lowest in the social hierarchy- change gradually as one moves across the countryside. There exist a whole series of different dialects which gradually merge into one another. This is referred to as language continuum. At the other end of the social scale, however, the situation is very different. Speakers of the highest social class employ Standard English. At the end of the pyramid (bottom), on the other hand, we find a far greater degree of regional variation in the most localized regional English dialects:



**Figure 2.1: *Social and regional dialect variation***

Not all people stay in one social position throughout their lives. Those who climb the social scale will tend to modify their accent in the direction of RP, thereby helping to maintain the existing relationship between class and accent. Speakers with a Bradford accent would begin to pronounce more aitches, for example. It should also be noticed that distinctions between dialects in the UK have become less clear over the past 50 years, and have been complicated by immigration and by the homogenizing influences of mass media.

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<sup>2</sup> RP is the Received Pronunciation which means the accent presented as a model for the learner. ‘Received’ means to be ‘accepted in the best society’. It has been estimated that only about three per cent of the English population speak RP.

A particularly interesting example of accents and social status, which Trudgill (1983: 61) gives is the non-prevocalic /r/. He argues that English accents *without* non-prevocalic /r/ have more status and are considered more 'correct' than accents *with*. RP, the prestige accent, does not have this /r/, and non-prevocalic /r/ is often used on radio, television and in the theatre to indicate that a character is rural, uneducated or both- one frequently hears it employed for comic effect in radio comedy series. In New York City, however, accents *with* non-prevocalic /r/ have more prestige and are considered more 'correct' than those *without*. The pronunciation of words like *car* and *cart* without an /r/ is socially stigmatised, and generally speaking, the higher up the social scale a speaker is, the more non-prevocalic /r/s he is likely to use. However, in English towns where both types of pronunciation can be heard, such as Bristol and Reading, this pattern is completely reversed.

#### 2.3.1.2 *Styles of English*

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Another example of the difficulty of reflecting these differences in translation can be taken from Hughes and Trudgill (1996: 10). They maintain that regardless of what dialect people speak they will use different sorts of language depending on what sort of social situation they find themselves in. No one uses exactly the same kind of English when they are talking to their friends in a café or pub as when they are talking to strangers in a more formal situation. Hughes and Trudgill call these situational varieties *styles*, and argue that stylistic variation can be thought of as taking place along a kind of sliding scale of formality. Styles of English range from very formal to very informal, with a whole continuum of varieties in between. Most often, differences between styles have to do with words, with very informal or colloquial vocabulary often being referred to as slang. For example, 'fatigued' is a very formal word (although rarely used), while 'tired' is an intermediate or neutral word, while 'knackered' is a very informal or slang word. They all mean the same thing, but they are stylistically very different:

- 1- My companion is exceedingly fatigued.
- 2- My friend is extremely tired.
- 3- My mate is bloody knackered.

- 1- زميلي متعبٌ جداً
- 2- صديقي متعب للغاية
- 3- صاحبي ميت من التعب

Back translation into English:

- 1- My companion is exceedingly tired.
- 2- My friend is extremely tired.
- 3- My mate is dead tired.

As we can see, there is not much difference among the three sentences except in terms of formality where the third is clearly less formal than the other two but it cannot give the same impression as of the original.

#### **2.3.1.3 Dialects and grammar**

Another interesting example of the untranslatability of dialects relates to what Hughes and Trudgill (1996: 42) mentioned regarding the difference between Standard English grammar and dialect grammar. The following passage, which is taken from Norwich area, is likely to strike most English speakers as exaggeratedly formal-jokey, archaic or literary:

Every time they go round John's, there's trouble. He like his peace and quiet, and I understand that, but they don't see it at all. They get across with him, and he get across with them.

The passage shows that the East Anglian verb forms do not have a present tense ending at all in any person, unlike the Berkshire dialect which has the present-tense -s for all persons:

I sees him every day on my way home. He likes to stop and have a chat, and I generally has the time for that. We often stops at in at that pub- you goes there sometimes too, right?

This brief introduction to British accents and dialects is intended to give an idea about the relationship between language varieties and class in Britain. In the following section the way such dialects are dealt with in subtitling English-language audiovisuals into Arabic will be examined.

#### 2.3.1.4 Literature on the subtitling of dialects

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Altano (1988) argues that the use of dialects can be explained as the celebration of the working class, both urban and rural, who are more apt to discourse in the expressive tones of regional usage. They are primarily used for characterization and thus permeate the text when the characters speak. He examines how the dialects in 'Il Pasticciaccio', a novel by Carlo Emilio Gadda, were translated into American-English and maintained that it was impossible to recreate the characterization through the language achieved by the author in his assignment of one dialect for each character. The equivalent quality and quantity of American regionalisms are lacking because variations in American speech are more a factor of accent than diction. Therefore, he advises translators to keep the text current despite the danger which this may bring as slang is a vital element in language. This study will attempt to see to what extent this view point is right in translating English-language dialects into Arabic.

Fawcett (1996) maintains that in *Being at Home with Claude* (Beaudin, 1993) the sociolect is represented in the subtitles by a variety of means so that "What are you doing'?" becomes "Wadda ya doin". But in this case the subtitler is forcing the reader to attempt mentally to reconstruct the gangster-style sound and thus attempt to avoid information loss by reproducing rather than repressing the sociolect. This resulted in an increase in the decoding effort involved in mentally 'oralising' a sound on the basis of a written script. By the time an English viewer has mentally reconstituted the required sound, a number of other subtitles will have gone by unread. Moreover, Fawcett argues that any attempt to represent the dialectal or sociolectal variety of the original will almost inevitably result in offence to some cultural group whose dialect is being used to indicate inferiority or criminality. Again, this is a further piece of advice to avoid the recreation of dialects in the target text, especially in subtitling.

Moreover, Karamitroglou (1997) argues that only dialects that have already appeared in a written form in printed materials are allowed to be used in subtitles. For example, it is possible to use words such as 'thee' for 'you' but not 'wadda ya doin?' since such sociolect forms are not immediately recognizable and comprehensible by the viewers' eye.

Similarly, Jaskanen (2001) proposes with regard to subtitling dialects that they are still rarely seen because of the readability issue. She quotes what the subtitler Eija Pokkinen said in this regard: "I would like to use dialects in translations, but they are considered to be difficult to read". Another reason for shunning subtitling dialect is to reserve the flavour of the source text's reality. The subtitler of the Irish series *Family* (Doyle, 1994) was criticised for relying heavily on dialectal expressions. The illusion of the invisibility of the subtitles was broken when they did not seem to fit the reality of a Dublin working class family.

Assis Rosa's article (2001) is similar to Jackel's in that it talks about the problems of subtitling cultural connotations. Subtitling, she argues, faces a problem in finding a correspondence between both cultural and linguistic variations. A further obstacle is the fact that subtitling is required to adopt TT written as well as spoken registers similar to those of the ST in accordance with the norms of the medium of the subtitles: writing. She points out that native speakers usually value the formal written standard in comparison to the non-standard informal speech which is promptly pushed to the edges.

The articles above clearly show that it is difficult to subtitle and read dialects. Therefore, considering that Arab native speakers use MSA in writing and never use colloquial, this study will not attempt to suggest colloquial Arabic as an alternative to MSA in subtitling English-language audiovisuals into Arabic. There is no purpose in creating a new barrier to find a solution to another.

Jackel (2001) examines the subtitling of dialects in *La Haine* (Kassovitz, 1995), a French film that deals with several hot issues such as unemployment, youth, culture, integration of ethnic minorities and urban violence, revealing France as a multicultural and divided society. She examined the extent to which American-English subtitles have succeeded in presenting French multicultural society to the Americans. She finds that the variety of the film's speech forms created difficulties for the subtitlers such as the fast speech rate, dense visual and nonverbal phonic information, bad language, misuse of words, local colloquialisms, and slang. To test

if the subtitles were successful, Jackel asks the following questions: To what extent did the subtitlers find suitable equivalents in the target language? What factors determined their choice? To what extent did the subtitling determine the reception of the film in the English-speaking market? Jackel discovered that to resolve the issue the subtitlers opted for a mixture of styles and chose American slang as the first step. Then certain political and cultural references to French society disappeared while other references were transported and replaced by American equivalents. According to *The Independent*, as cited in Jackel (p. 227), the subtitles were too American to the degree that “the authenticity of the dialogue was almost entirely lost”. Moreover, David Styan, also cited in Jackel (p. 227), wrote: “Sadly, Kassovitz's multiple meanings, his nuanced visual and verbal puns, are likely to be lost on a non-French audience”. For example, the subtitled version differentiates less between the three heroes' speech than the French original version, and subtitled rude words may appear more negative, aggressive and hateful than their French equivalent. For these reasons the film was not a great success in America:

The film's lack of appeal to the targeted US audiences had less to do with subtitling (in comparison with Britain, the subtitles were hardly noticed in the US), more with perceptible cultural differences. (Jäckle, 2001: 223)

Finally, Jackel claims that the subtitlers of *La Haine* acted as cultural experts, but their efforts to bridge the cultural gap between France and America did not go far enough. This is partially true in the sense that however hard the subtitlers tried to bridge the cultural gap between both cultures, there remained areas that were difficult to perfect due to the nature of both the source and target texts.

Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 191-2) argue that dialect and slang are characterized by non-standard grammar, specific lexical features, and a distinctive accent. So, any dialect should be pinpointed within the social and geographical layout of the target culture. Then a decision about whether it should be considered in subtitles or not should be made, taking into consideration its function. Diaz-Cintas and Remael also stress that it is unlikely that a target dialect will be identical to the source one. In this case, talented translators could rely on interaction with the film's

other signs to do the job based on an estimate of what viewers from the target culture might be expected to fill in themselves.

To summarize, the translators' efforts to compensate for the source dialects faced major obstacles such as the difficulty to reading dialect on screen and even finding an appropriate target dialect. Finding such a dialect means a recreation of the source characters but without sounding too colloquial in the target language. And as different scholars have suggested that the use of dialect in subtitling is not effective in transferring the dialect of the source text, the study will try to find a way to compensate for the loss of the function(s) of dialects without creating any new barrier. We will see how in chapter 4.

### **2.3.2 Subtitling swearing and the influence of censorship on translation**

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The issue of power and ideology has always had an impact on translation, especially the audiovisual one since the latter is reachable by huge audiences. Hatim and Mason (1997: 144) define 'ideology' as the tacit assumptions, beliefs and value systems which are shared collectively by social groups. Usually, as Calzada Perez (2003: 145) put it, translators translate according to the ideological settings in which they learn and perform their tasks. Moreover, Tymoczko (2003: 183) argues that the ideology of translation resides not simply in the text translated, but in the voicing and stance of the translator, and in its relevance to the receiving audience. Therefore, the translator, according to Witte (1992: 72), must be able to judge/estimate (from this perspective) the client's 'knowledge' (or 'lack of knowledge') of one another's culture and to anticipate the impact this knowledge may have on behaviour patterns in the concrete cross-cultural situation. In other words, the translator should strike a balance between being faithful to both the source text and the different factors in the target culture that affect its transfer in a way that avoids any kind of conflict. Conflict, according to Baker (2006: 1) refers to a situation in which two or more parties seek to undermine each other because they have incompatible goals, competing interests, or fundamentally different values. Censorship emerges in this sense to minimize this state of conflict using translation as one of the important tools to do so. In other words, and as Tymoczko and Gentzler (2002) suggest:

Translation is associated with power in all these senses, in part, because translation is a metonymic process as well as a metaphoric one. Translations are inevitably partial; meaning in a text is always over-determined, and the information in a source text is therefore always more extensive than a translation can convey. Conversely, the receptor language and culture entail obligatory features that shape the possible interpretations of the translation, as well as extending the meanings of the translation in directions other than those inherent in the source text... The very words associated with politics and ideology used here (i.e., partiality, partisan, participate) suggest that the partial nature of translations is what makes them also an exercise of power. (2002: xvii-xviii)

Similarly, Billiani (2007: 3-4) defines censorship as a form of manipulative rewriting of discourses by one agent or structure over another agent or structure, aiming at filtering the stream of information from one source to another. It functions as a filter in the complex process of cross-cultural transfer encouraged by translations. Both censorship and translation establish a power structure that sustains and shapes their respective, often intertwined operational modes. Similarly, Munday (2007: 196-7) maintains that translation operates as a form of intercultural transfer, opening up a source text to new readers in a new language, where it will most commonly be read as it were originally written in the target language.

An example of this is Spain in the middle of the twentieth century. Vandaele (2002a) discusses the issue of translation and censorship at the time of Franco regime in Spain where the Junta monitored dubbed movies of foreign audiovisuals and banned anything that threatened morals and values. As translators did not want a rejection of the dubbed material by the Junta, they went for a safe translation that would be acceptable. Indeed, it is the translator's ideology and the dominant target language poetics that are the determiners of a translated text as Lefevere who is quoted in Munday (2007: 197) maintains. Vandaele (ibid: 279) argues that it is still commonly thought in Spanish society that content manipulation largely consisted in the cutting of footage and the suppression or toning down of taboo expressions.

Bassnett and Lefevere (1990: 11) pay less attention to the influence of linguistics on the transfer of a text into another language than to the interaction between translation and culture, to the way culture impacts upon and constrains



translation, and to the larger issues of context, history and convention. Similarly, Thomas (1998: 107) maintains that the achievements of ancient civilizations resulted from a clash of cultures and ideas and therefore translators should be faithful to the source text to translate it as it is without any changes so that the target culture is able to perceive things differently. He argues that:

Translators have an important role to play in introducing different cultures to each other and in provoking a healthy, creative and potentially fruitful clash of cultures. They have to select and translate texts which show us that ours is not the only way of looking at the world and in this way we may be persuaded to take a fresh look at our most cherished traditions and perceptions and rethink them. (1998: 107)

Athamneh and Zitawi (1999: 135) argue that omission is one of the methods that translators resort to when translating English cartoons into Arabic in order to get rid of swear words for cultural reasons: "Such omissions do not fall under the category of errors; rather they reflect the translators' conscious attempts to adapt the text in accordance with cultural, social, and marketing considerations". The authors give examples of some of the intentional omissions that were taken from some episodes of children's animated pictures such as: "You low down", "What a b\*\*\*\*", "Damn you" and "Damn it". Although the article is important in the sense that it shows how the translator can freely omit swear words in dubbing into Arabic, it only handles dubbing with relation to cartoon films that are addressed to children where it is normal to apply censorship in Arab culture.

Khuddro (2000) maintains that swear words in English-language films that are subtitled into Arabic are usually omitted to suit the Arabic-speaking audiences who have zero tolerance for religious or sexual connotations. A good way to overlook these obscene words is by resorting to dynamic equivalence rather than to faithful or literal. The sentence: "You look like hell" can best be interpreted as: "تبدو بائساً", "You look miserable". The word 'miserable' will make more sense in Arabic than 'hell' which also has religious connotations. So, Khuddro suggests ruling it out all together but does not explain if this has any effect on the film's message or not.

Mazid (2006) argues that there is a kind of filtering or slanting that occurs in the form of resorting to omission, euphemism and the different ways of chunking in

the Arabic subtitles of English-language films. He gives examples from the subtitles of *Tempted* (Bennett, 2001) and *Big Daddy* (Dugan, 1999) in his analysis. Some of these examples are: “This kind of marital s\*\*\*” is subtitled as "هذه المسائل الزوجية" which back translates as “These marital affairs/issues” and “Why did you f\*\*\*ing lie to me” is translated as "لماذا كذبت علي بحق السماء؟" which back translates as “Why did you lie to me for Heaven’s sake?” Mazid proposes that mainstream media in the Arab countries do not admit obscenity or swearing unless “filtered” or “slanted”. Again, Mazid does not illustrate if such censorship has any effect on the message of the film.

Similar to Arab culture, Asian culture is also keen on euphemising swearing and taboos. Chen (2004) examines the subtitling of swear words of American English films into Hong Kong Chinese. Omission and euphemism are two of the methods used by subtitlers to hide the true meanings of swear words. For example, ‘Mother-f\*\*\*er’ is not translated and ‘F\*\*\*’ is translated as ‘Freak’. One of the reasons for censorship in a communist country has little to do with religion, but rather it has to do with culture. Film distributors cannot sell their product if the censors spot any kind of obscenity in the subtitle. Another reason is the fact that the written word has greater impact on the readers than the spoken one. Chen maintains that Cantonese equivalents should be used to subtitle American English swear words in order to convey the original spirit in a more effective way and thus arouse the greatest empathy on the part of the audience. What Chen suggests is indeed important in the sense that toning down swear words is more effective than omitting them all together or finding equivalents for them in the target culture. This study will try to benefit from these findings by applying them to *Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983), which is to be analyzed in details in chapter 4.

As far as the Western and Latin American cultures are concerned, Krasovska's article (2004) depicts some translational issues in both the Russian and Latvian subtitles of the American film *The City of Ghosts* (Dillon, 2002). One of these issues is the translation of abusive expressions as she calls them. Krasovska argues that shifts are needed since what is considered vulgar or obscene differs from culture to culture. Moreover, the effect of direct transfer would be stronger than that of the source language: “It is for this reason, that in both translations, Latvian and Russian, there is a tendency to minimize, or even avoid the use of direct swear words to reproduce more accurately the mood” (ibid: 27). For example, “F\*\*\*ing b\*\*\*\*!” is

translated as (Slampa/ Лотакыха!) “B\*\*\*\*” and “I called you a f\*\*\*ing b\*\*\*\*. F\*\*\* off!” is translated as “B\*\*\*\*”, too.

Moreover, regarding censorship in Latin America, Scandura (2004) argues that censorship can occur in the form of changing the titles or subtitles of a programme, changing the plot to fit the audience and toning down strong language. She maintains that the latter is popular in Latin America. It is the custom to subtitle vulgar words using neutral ones. For example, the expression ‘to make love’ is used instead of another slang expression with the same meaning. One reason for this is that written foul language is stronger than the oral one. Scandura also maintains, according to a survey that was done in Argentina in 2002, that viewers do not always reject censorship and that they are quite happy with it in some cases.

Coming back to Spain, Fernández Dobao (2006: 223) proposes, on the basis of Newmark’s equivalent effect, that the stylistic register of the source text, its degree of informality, and the frequency of swearing need to be retained in the target text in order to produce on the audience the same effect the original text produces in its audience, something that makes the task of the translation of such culture-specific phenomenon a complex one. The fact that western societies, such as the English and the Spanish, share taboos does not mean that there are no differences among them. As a result, the lack of exact equivalence in the translation of many swear words impels translators to look for the highest possible degree of equivalence (compensation) linguistically, pragmatically and culturally speaking. The following examples illustrate some of the methods that the translator can use in order to achieve this. First, the source language sentence will be given, followed by a back translation of the Spanish one into English:

A1- Get the f\*\*\* outta my face with that s\*\*\*! (ST)

A2- Vete a tomar por culo con esa mierda (TT)

A3- Bugger off with that s\*\*\*!

B1- We gotta be real f\*\*\*ing delicate

B2- Tenemos que ser muy delicados

B3- We have to be very delicate

C1- Die, you mother f\*\*\*er! Die!

C2- ¡morid ¡cabrones ¡morid

C3- Die! Bastard! Die!

As a result of her analysis of *8 Mile* (Hanson, 2002) in Finnish, French and Russian subtitles, Taivalkoski-Shilov (2008) discovers that both the Finnish as well as the French subtitlers translated, as closely as possible, 14 obscene words out of 35 in the ST, while the Russian subtitler translated only 2 and omitted the rest. What is worth noting is Taivalkoski-Shilov's comment: "The impression we have of the Russian subtitler is negative and unprofessional, even though the comments on the subtitles in Russian internet forums seem to have been rather positive" (2008: 265).

The above three articles show that even in Western culture censorship and euphemism can be found in AVT, unlike what many people believe about this culture. Hence, one should not really blame translators of audiovisuals into Arabic if they practice censorship on taboo and swear words. However, this does not mean that they should have absolute freedom to do so. Indeed. As Diaz-Cintas and Remael (2007: 195-7) maintain, swear words are often toned down in subtitles or even deleted to save space, but should be translated in some way if they contribute to the characterization or fulfil a thematic function in a film.

To conclude, politeness on screen is a necessity that is brought about by the fact that written swear words have more influence than spoken ones and that some cultures would still feel that there is a need to protect themselves from the foreign. These two reasons influence the translation of taboos even among what are known as modern cultures as the examples above showed. But as euphemism tends not to dramatically affect the characterization and the plot in the film, omission may suffice as we will see in chapter 4.

### 2.3.3 Subtitling humour

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Before we go into detail about the subtitling humour, it is worth touching upon the degree of translatability of this genre. First, the issue of untranslatability was raised by Catford (1965: 94) who argues that this term occurs when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the [target language] text. He (ibid: 99) distinguishes between linguistic and cultural

untranslatability. The latter, which matters more in this study, occurs when a situational feature, functionally relevant for the [source-language] text, is completely absent from the culture of which the [target language] is a part. However, when we talk about humour, which is in fact cultural, then we talk about a universal phenomenon, something that may make it translatable. Newmark (2003: 126-7) argues that, in principle, humour is universal, and can be, more or less, translated, provided that the source and target language readership or the listeners are educationally at the same level. He disagreed with Basil Hatim who said at a conference (2003: 127) that an Arabic readership will not understand irony in translation, and argued that if the readership is well educated, then there should be no reason why irony will not be understood. Chiaro (1992: 77) maintains that translating a joke from English into another language is not easy. Similarly, when a joke is translated into English, results tend to be equally disastrous.

Towards the end of his article, Newmark (2003: 127) confirms that since individuals have such different senses of humour (one man's giggle is another's hoot), translation theorists are not likely to reach agreement about it. Moreover, Vandaele (2002c: 149) proposes that the combined object of humour translation must have seemed until now so vast, disorientating and dangerous ocean that few academic efforts were made to theorize the processes, agents, contexts and products involved. However, there have been several attempts by theorists to apply humour theory to translation (Attardo, 2002) or to try to find approaches to the translation of humour (Muhawi, 2002; Vandaele 2002b; Delabastita, 2002; and Diaz-Cintas 2001b). In general, it can be said that there is no common ground, i.e. similarity, between meanings and/or pragmatic forces in humour translation theory. What happens is that existing approaches to humour translation incorporate a theory of translation and apply it to humour.

This does not mean, however, that humour cannot be effectively translated. After all, translators should be able to find a suitable approach which helps them bridge the gap between both culture and language as much as possible and retain some or all of the humorous effect of the source joke. And, as there is no particular theory to help translators translate humour as illustrated above, researchers try to choose an approach that both respects the target culture taboos and education levels as well as compensates for the humour of the source text.

As far as puns are concerned, Delabastita (1996: 128) defines punning as a textual phenomenon contrasting “linguistic structures with *different meanings* on the basis of their *formal similarity*”. Nord (1994: 61-2) proposes that most plays on words are ‘untranslatable’ within the framework of a strict equivalence model. Similarly, Barbe (1996: 261-2) maintains that unfamiliarity with puns causes word-for-word translation which leads to numerous unintentionally funny effects. Moreover, she proposes that in the translation of humorous shows, like *Monty Python* (Chapman et al., 1969), dubbers take considerable liberties in order to transfer humour.

Gottlieb (1997a) argues that translating wordplay in an environment as semiotically complex as a satirical television programme is probably no more difficult than translating wordplay in the “words only” environment of (say) a satirical novel. In the end, it is only the overall quality of the outcome, which depends on the talent of the subtitler, that decides. Gottlieb attributes the loss of wordplays in the target language to different factors such as: language specific constraints (finding linguistic counterparts in the target text), media-specific constraints (subtitling) and human constraints (lack of talent, interest, experience, etc). He gives an example of how 51 items of wordplay in an English TV comedy programme, *Carrott’s Commercial Breakdown* (Mordecai, 1989), were compensated by only 25 items in the Danish version. Gottlieb also proposes that compensation can be a solution to render the wordplay in the TT. The ST off-screen narration goes: “In Northern England the locals play a game called ferret legging...” was rendered in the Danish subtitles as: “In Northern England the locals play a game called come-freely forward” (back translated literally) which means hide-and-seek, a popular Danish children’s game.

Furthermore, Taivalkoski-Shilov (2008) points out that the Finnish subtitler of *8 Mile* managed to render almost 65% of the wordplays in the original, that the French subtitler managed to render around a third and that the Russian subtitler translated only 10% of these wordplays. Taivalkoski-Shilov maintains that this is related to the experience of the subtitler and how skilled s/he is. However, the fact that the Finnish subtitler managed to render most of the wordplays when the French and Russian failed to do so cannot only be attributed to professionalism. Cultural and linguistic factors are also crucial in this regard.

Generally speaking, in films and sitcoms puns become almost untranslatable because they are spoken on screen, rather than written, and it is difficult to make use of the medium for reasons of time and space limitation. Furthermore, when there is a

relationship between the moving picture and speech, it is then difficult to change or ignore the joke. Puns sometimes need to be modified or totally changed to elicit laughter, especially if there are no equivalents for such puns in the TL. This is in fact what this study will try to do. Puns will not be translated literally as this could be ineffective since Arabic and English are completely different in structure, never mind the gap between their respective cultures.

Attardo (1994), (2002) argues that no coherent theory of humour, at any linguistic level, had been proposed. However, Raskin's semantic-script theory of humour (SSTH), according to Attardo, established that all humour involves a semantic-pragmatic process. The SSTH included a semantic opposition between the scripts activated by a text and a violation of the maxims of the principle of cooperation. It was also explicitly based on the idea of matching the speakers' competence in relation to humour. That is to say, the presence or absence of laughter correlates with the presence or absence of humour. Finally, Attardo suggests pragmatics as the natural place to locate the linguistic side of the interdisciplinary study of humour. In fact, the pragmatic approach, although important, does not address issues that are related to cultural and linguistic differences which make the transfer of the joke even harder.

Similarly, Vandaele (2002b) proposes two aspects of humour mechanisms in film comedy: incongruity and superiority. The former is defined as a conflict between what is expected and what actually occurs in the joke. There are the linguistic incongruities such as stuttering which goes against our expectation of fluent and economical language; the pragmatic incongruities which assume a humorous charge by breaking cognitive schemes concerning the actual use of language; and the narrative incongruities which are defined as a 'reinforcement' or 'happiness increment' and a 'heightened self-esteem'. These incongruities, especially the pragmatic one, may help translators to convey the joke more efficiently by concentrating on its pragmatic meaning. Again, this model does not tell us how far the translator can go in censoring any sexual connotations, replacing the source puns with equal ones, and in defining the cultural references which are usually used as a reference point to elicit laughter.

Raphaelson-West (1989) argues that humour can be rendered into the target language if only we keep in mind that it will not be as funny as it is in the source language. She advises translators to keep the cultural context in mind, to locate the

humorous aspect or aspects of the text, and to try to explain or duplicate these aspects. In order to do this, she suggests making semantic trees, creating branches which account for humour and dual scripts. If the dual script is amusing in one language but not in the target language, it may be easier to write a new, target-culture-based joke instead of trying to translate the original. While this approach seems practical, it gives the translator the freedom to write the joke s/he wants in case there is no equivalent in the target culture, even if that joke has no relation to the context.

Zabalbeascoa (1996) maintains that the cultural specificity of the ST may make rendering humour difficult, something that causes frustration. In this case, the author proposes that, if the translator cannot find solutions for certain types of problems, there is a danger that the translation may be received by the audience as more bitter, less humorous criticism of politicians, for example, than may have been the intention in the English version. As a result, he suggests a model of translation that is based on priorities and restrictions. The first question that should be asked is: Is humour a priority? According to Zabalbeascoa, it is not a priority on a global level. But if it is desirable and a priority, then entirely different jokes may be substituted for the original ones. Thus, one must consider the possible functions of humour as well as the mental states and attitudes expressed by it. The five priorities that he proposes are: 1) doing well in popularity ratings, 2) being funny, 3) aiming for an immediate response in the form of entertainment and laughter, 4) integrating the words of the translation with the other constituent parts of the individual text, 5) or using language and textual structures deemed appropriate to the channel of communication. As for restrictions, some are related to the differences in background knowledge of the original and prospective audiences; differences in cultural and moral values, customs and traditions; differences in conventional themes and techniques of joke-telling; and the translator's professional context. As one can notice, there is nothing new in Zabalbeascoa's proposed model. The priorities he suggests are what most translators look for when they try to translate humour. But the question which needs to be answered, and which he did not, is how to deal with the restrictions to overcome them.

Leibold (1989) argues that it is possible to render the humour of the original text by producing an equivalent effect and gaining a funny response. She gives some examples of puns and plays on words from *San Antonio*, a novel by the



French writer, Frédéric Dard, and proposes that equivalence maintainable in the target text (English). For instance, Monsieur Kelknoonaar, Colonel Dükkonlajoaa and Inspecteur Bakunu are proper name puns that Leibold translated freely as Mr, Uhatöderndgörk, Colonel Djole Skruubool, and Inspector Berasbööm, respectively. As can be noted, Leibold managed to retain the same deceiving spelling and yet preserve the original meaning, even though it was not mandatory to do this as such types of puns have minimal links to the context. It should be noted here that the possibility of using equivalence is limited to French texts that are translated into English where linguistic and cultural factors help in bridging the gap between the two texts.

Furthermore, Muhawi (2002) suggests dynamic equivalence when translating jokes from Arabic into English. He gives an example from a joke that takes advantage of an attitude that glorifies MSA and grants no status to the vernacular: In an elementary Arabic language class in the south of Tunisia, a teacher draws a cat on the blackboard and asks the children what it is. “This is a gatt (dialect for cat)”, says one of them. “No”, says the teacher. “This is not a gatt. It’s a qitt.” “Alright”, says the child. “It’s a qitt. But it sure looks a lot like a gatt”. The teacher categorically denies linguistic validity to the spoken variety, but to the child it seems to make no sense that the word he knows is not the ‘correct’ one. The translated joke, though dynamically equivalent, cannot function as an equivalent cultural form, even when the humour in the joke is appreciated. The target audience will have to imagine the situation evoked by the joke. An alternative option, Muhawi suggests, would be to create a dynamically equivalent joke in English based on the disparity between the standard and the dialectal pronunciation (say, Scottish or Cockney) of the English phoneme /t/. For example, the teacher draws a bottle on the blackboard, the student pronounces it *bo’e/e*. The teacher says, “No, it’s not boe’l; it’s a bottle”... and so on.

Taking into consideration that Muhawi’s article discusses the translation of jokes into English, looking for an equivalent would still be more of a challenge than when translation is done into Arabic. This is because many jokes in English-language sitcoms and films use sex as a reference point to elicit laughter, something that can be considered a barrier in the target culture. Similarly, while it may be possible to find a linguistic equivalent to a joke, it is harder to find an equivalent to a

joke that is based on a cultural reference. Added to this is the fact that the article is about written rather than audiovisual humour which also imposes some limitations.

Zabalbeascoa (2003) proposes some ways to translate AV irony and gives examples from *Trainspotting* (Boyle, 1996). The conclusion that he reached is that rendering the irony of words (in conjunction or not with verbal elements) is frequently more important than trying to achieve lexical equivalence:

It seems important to achieve coherence and complementarity between the picture, the sound and the words, rather than correspondences restricted to the verbal plane even if the final solution is subordinated to the criterion of synchrony with the pictures (including lip-synch and others). (2003: 16)

Although Zabalbeascoa is trying to pay more attention to the pragmatic than the literal equivalent of the translated joke, he does offer a clear approach that guides the translators' work.

Ghazala (2007) suggests some procedures to translate irony, which is, according to Nash who is quoted in Ghazala, is a major stylistic resort for humour. Some of these procedures consist of locating irony in the SL text in order to avoid distorting the central point of the original; understanding its cultural, social, political, religious, etc. implications; looking for an identical style of irony in Arabic which, as Ghazala maintains, would be the best solution; suggesting an equivalent style of irony in Arabic that can reflect the English counterpart in one way or another; or finally, tracing a cultural, social, literary, political, etc. equivalent image of irony in Arabic.

Jaskanen (2001) proposes that the reality of subtitling be approached from the view point of and difficulties in translating humour. She gives some examples from the subtitled US comedy *Sabrina* (Scovell, 1996) and shows the difficulties encountered in transferring humour into the target culture by equivalent or faithful methods. She argues that the subtitlers in these examples must have felt at a loss as they needed to present what is unfamiliar in the target culture, and that which is brought from the ST, into a humorous and familiar context. Moreover, there are some puns which are visualized and which in this case are difficult to depict. Furthermore, and even when the subtitlers chose equivalent terms, those terms violated the principle of 'referential accuracy' and thus the ideal of the invisibility of subtitling. In other words, target culture adaptation gives rise to a 'credibility

problem'. So, the concept of equivalence is not tangible and may mean an open-ended interpretation of the source jokes.

Similarly, Grun and Dollerup (2003) argues that in the translations of comics 'equivalence' is impossible as no two cultures or languages are symmetrical. They suggest two different kinds of 'gain': namely: gain without loss and gain with loss. The former is found when the target-language text is more specific than the source-language text whereas the latter is found in cases where there are 1:1 lexical equivalents in the source and target languages.

Ptaszynski (2004) analyses nine jokes adopting Zabalbeascoa's (1996) categories mentioned above. Then she discusses the translatability of jokes with reference to three approaches: Catford's division between linguistic and cultural untranslatability, Ke's sociosemiotic view, and Toury's target-oriented approach. For Catford, who is quoted in Ptaszynski, the notion of untranslatability is connected with the notion of equivalence: "Untranslatability occurs when it is impossible to build functionally relevant features of the situation into the contextual meaning of the target language text" (2004: 179). Ke, on the other hand, approaches untranslatability from a sociosemiotic point of view, based on a distinction between three dimensions of sign relationship, namely semantic, pragmatic and syntactic and three types of untranslatability: referential, pragmatic and interlingual. Gideon Toury's approach is target-oriented. He argues that translations are facts of target cultures. This means that the translatability of the source text depends on the target conditions. When it comes to rendering humour into Arabic, one can simply argue that it is indeed a problem of culture in the first place, although language constitutes another barrier.

Ptaszynski offers three approaches that she finds suitable for the translation of humour. She does not, however, prefer or recommend one over another. But the most suitable of these approaches to the translation of humour into Arabic seems to be Toury's because it pays attention to the target text and audience.

Diaz-Cintas (2001b) assesses the limitations under which the translator of humour has to work, foregrounding the value of the semiotic dimension, of which the written target text is only a component. He proposed that humour is undoubtedly one of the instances of verbal re-creation that fully challenges translators' skills, pushing them to search for imaginative solutions (adding, deleting, recreating, etc.) that could be different from the original in order to achieve a similar effect and fulfil the

expectations of the target audience. With regard to Zabalbeascoa's restrictions, Diaz-Cintas maintains that subtitling (since Zabalbeascoa talked about dubbing) can also be another restriction as the original dialogue can be heard all the time. Moreover, some jokes may be embedded in strong language and therefore translators may activate mechanisms of self-censorship to avoid upsetting the audience:

The inevitability of losses on both denotative as well as connotative levels in some parts of any work is a condition sine qua non? of any translation attempt, especially when the translator is faced with humorous contexts and some very restrictive limitations pertaining to the medium. (Diaz Cintas, 2001: 189)

To conclude, if it is taken for granted that humour can be translated, then the approach to its translation should be defined according to the different factors that play roles in the process such as the cultural and linguistic ones. Even when a specific approach is adopted, the translation may still incur loss. The equivalence and pragmatic approaches have been recommended by different scholars as we have seen above, although the equivalence approach is sometimes criticised on grounds of credibility issue, something that necessitates a set of priorities and restrictions before the translation starts as Zabalbeascoa suggested (1996). But the question here is how to deal with such priorities and restrictions in order to deliver the message to the target audience? That is what this study will try to answer in chapters 4 and 5.

## **2.4 Quality in audiovisual translation**

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One of the early articles that suggested steps to guarantee better subtitles was Minchinton's 3-page 'Fitting Titles' (1987) in which he stresses the necessity of explaining jokes and slang in the script as this makes the subtitler's task easier:

No matter what style of titling is used, for film or television, glossaries in dialogue lists and scripts will ensure faster work, more accurate translation, and greater audience appreciation. (ibid: 281)

For example, Taivalkoski-Shilov (2008) mentions how UIP (United International Pictures company which produced *8 Mile*) provided the translators with a detailed and helpful 'spotting dialogue list' (214 pages) and a leaflet entitled '8 Mile Lyric Translation Guidelines' (39 pages) which contained explanations, instructions (general guidelines, recommendations for keeping certain expressions in English, etc.) and "alternate lyrics", i.e., interlingual translations of the rap lyrics.

Likewise, Diaz-Cintas (2001a) attributes high-quality subtitling to a good dialogue list. Such a list is usually supplied by the film distributor or producer. It should offer, besides dialogue, metatextual information on the implicit socio-cultural connotations. It should also explain punning, wordplay, possible double entendres, colloquialisms and dialectalisms. Moreover, it should disclose the origin and the usage in context of certain terms that may be obscure at first sight and give the correct spelling of all proper names.

Similarly, Zabalbeascoa (1996) argues that the 'success' of joke translation should be assisted by a 'stylebook' that classifies jokes, bridges gaps and includes general statements about translation and specific contextualized translating assignments.

Furthermore, James (2001) stresses the importance of having a high quality original script to enable the subtitlers to transfer it to the TT with clarity since a poor script will influence the quality of the subtitles. However, if the ambiguity in the script is intended by the writer, then the subtitler has to take a decision on whether to keep or clarify it.

In most cases, major subtitling companies in Arab countries do not receive a dialogue list and translators translate without one (see Appendices A, B, C, D, E). This will definitely affect the quality of the translation. Although the producing companies are responsible for such a list, audiovisual translation companies may have to find other alternatives to compensate as will be suggested in the conclusion of this thesis.

In addition to the dialogue list, subtitlers also contribute to the quality of subtitles. Mueller (2001) holds subtitlers responsible for the quality of subtitles. She draws attention to the crucial issues of selecting, training and regular (quarterly) assessing of subtitlers. She claims this should really be taken into consideration by

companies. According to her, a subtitle can only be good as the person who prepares it, and good subtitles are unobtrusive and unseen<sup>3</sup>. When selecting subtitlers the following criteria should be applied (p. 144): native-speaker level aural comprehension of all registers of the source language, a high degree of written facility with the target language, wide vocabulary in languages, bicultural skill as well as the appropriate qualifications and experience. Added to these is the 100% comprehension in all varieties of slang, cultural references, half-finished sentences, body language, irony, puns, etc. She gives as an example from the German film *The Boys* (Woods, 1998) which was subtitled into English and required the German subtitlers to seek the help of advisers familiar with drug terminology.

Likewise, Diaz-Cintas (2005) attracts attention to low quality subtitling that goes hand-in-hand with the boom in audiovisual technology. What has happened is the huge rise in demand for subtitled films has lead to the mushrooming of AVT companies which are not well experienced in this field. In addition, poor working conditions, the poor training of newcomers, and the absence of proper in-house guidelines makes the task worse.

Indeed, the issue of translator training is as important as the dialogue list. In fact, an experienced and knowledgeable subtitler may compensate for the lack of a good dialogue list. Unfortunately, neither universities nor subtitling companies in the Arab world offer any training courses for this profession (except in Lebanon to a limited extent). The new subtitler is basically trained on the software programme and is given a general idea about the guidelines that the company follows regarding censorship.

Another way to assess the quality of audiovisual translation is by conducting questionnaires and asking the audience about the ability of a translation to convey the message of the translated material. For instance, in one of her essays, Chiaro (2004) investigates the way Verbally Expressed Humour is perceived by selecting a small corpus that was taken from around 300 hours of dubbed sitcoms and cartoons into Italian and by setting a web-based self-reporting questionnaire that explores people's reactions to both the VEH and the quality of translation. Depending on the respondent's answers, Chiaro reaches the conclusion that it is very often the case that occurrences of VEH either pass by unnoticed or are totally misunderstood,

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<sup>3</sup> Unseen in the sense that they read easily and do not distract the audience's attention.

especially when they depend on the recipients' encyclopaedic knowledge. The author suggests that more care should be taken in the actual control of translation and that more training of translators is essential.

A similar small-scale questionnaire was also conducted by Chiaro (2007) but which included both Italian as well British respondents in order to explore the perception of VEH and the impact that translation has on the Humour Responses. 22 British respondents watched seven video-clips in their language (English) and 34 Italians watched the same clips but in dubbed and subtitled Italian versions. The results showed that the Italian HR was slightly lower than that of the British respondents thus implying that translational impact on HR was minimal. Chiaro (ibid: 150) argues that the reason behind that could be a culture-specific thing in the sense that the British and Italian may have a different sense of humour however the translation was excellent.

Another study by Antonini and Chiaro (2005) aims at monitoring the quality of audiovisual translation, underscoring translation norms on Italian TV products and investigating the reception of such norms upon Italian viewers through testing the reception of a number of a random of a number of selected clips that were watched by 500 respondents. After viewing each clip, respondents were asked to rate their appreciation of the clip on a zero to ten graphic rating scale aimed at assessing the respondents' self-reported understanding of the content of the clip, and to briefly explain what they understood of it.

In an attempt to try to involve the audience in order to find out what affects the quality of audiovisual translation, Fuentes (2003) conducted an experiment in which he involved three ten-respondent groups who were asked to watch three ten-minute video clip versions of *Duck Soup* (McCarey: 1933). The ten respondents of the first group were native speakers of English who watched the original version. The native speakers of Spanish in the other two groups were requested to watch the subtitled and the dubbed version. The result which Fuentes came up with is that, despite the fact that both the subtitled and the dubbed versions do not reflect all the humorous aspects of the original one, text are in most cases translated literally:

The target text is also often marked by an acute lack of orality, which in my opinion is one of the main problems in audiovisual translation, especially in the case of Spain. This has a direct influence on the way the audiovisual

text is received by viewers. It even falsifies to a large extent the reality of the audiovisual message, since the target viewer receives a message distorted by an unnecessary, uncomfortable extreme literalness expressed in a uniform register, instead of a more appropriate and appealing array of colloquial registers typical of authentic contexts. (2003: 304)

To conclude, poor or high quality of audiovisual translation is in fact related to different elements such as the availability of a good dialogue list, good wages, training, editing, the availability of a reference library, and experience of translators. This should indeed be taken into consideration before any translations are judged. But even when such elements are available, experience on the part of the translator is still needed.

## 2.5 Dubbing

The term dubbing, or 'الدبلجة' in Arabic, only became familiar in the Arab world, Maluf (2005) argues, when there was a need to dub children programmes into Arabic. Only then did the development of this language transfer method see light. Despite this, the technique is still not as popular as subtitling for reasons such as the financial and aesthetic. Leaving aside children's and cartoon films, and countries such as Spain, Germany, Italy and France which prefer dubbing to subtitling to preserve their national identity rather than for reasons of censorship, the vast audience worldwide would prefer to listen to the original language of audiovisuals<sup>4</sup> and read the subtitles rather than watch a dubbed version in which the voices of the impersonating actors/actresses may not suit the original characters as we will see. Moreover, dubbing puts translators and adaptors in a dilemma when they want to maintain the same ideas and plot as the original audiovisual and at the same time make sure that lip synchronisation is achieved as well. Furthermore, it is noticeable that, apart from cartoons, the majority of films dubbed into Arabic, although not numerous, have been dubbed into MSA with the exception of a few films that have been dubbed into Egyptian.

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<sup>4</sup> Diaz Centaz (1999: 38) talked about Greece's experience in this regard. He says: "The innovation was extremely popular among housewives who could carry on with their chores and follow the plot on the screen without having to be stuck to the television set in order to read the linguistic exchanges".



Generally speaking, the history of dubbing can be related to the late 1920s when studios insisted that if films were no longer silent films they should have the highest quality dialogue (Parkinson, 1997: 86). Ivarsson (1992: 15-6) claims that dubbing started in 1927 when the audience could hear the actors and that by 1929 dubbing studios had spread all over Europe. Dries (1995: 9) maintains that dubbing was introduced at about the same time as the introduction of the original sound to the moving picture. At the same time the problem of exporting films to countries with another language needed a solution and dubbing was one. Maluf (2005) puts this differently. He suggests that when the articulation, intonation, accent, or dialect of the stars of the silent silver screen were inappropriate for the new films, studios resorted to dubbing over the dialogue, by adjusting the mouth movements of the original actors in the film to the voice of other actors.

Dubbing in Arabic speaking countries can be traced back to 1963. Maluf (2005) maintains that one of the first production houses, if not the first, to dub media programmes into Arabic was 'al-Ittiḥad al-Fanni' based in Cyprus and originally developed as a radio production house in 1963. The first experiment was a voiceover adaptation of a BBC radio episode of *Jane Eyre*. Video dubbing into Arabic, according to Maluf, came later in 1974 when Filmali dubbed the children's cartoon *Sindbad* which was followed by *Zeina Wa Nahḥoul* in 1975. In 1991 Filmali dubbed the first of a series of Mexican soaps into MSA. It was broadcast the privately-run Lebanese Broadcast Corporation (LBC) and was a success. In 1999, the first long feature film dubbed, *Police Academy*, was shown on Beirut's MTV. It was a test that dubbing could not withstand as we will see.

## **2.5.1 Barriers to dubbing into Arabic**

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Barriers of Dubbing can be summarized under three main categories. They relate to culture, aesthetics, and lip synchronization which also has three sub-barriers related to phonetics, content and character.

### **2.5.1.1 Cultural barriers**

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Culture can be said to be a frequent barrier in the audiovisual industry in general and in dubbing into Arabic in particular. This is because any gap between two different cultures which is not or cannot be bridged may cause alienation between the

audience and the characters. Moreover, this may also result in the fact that the audience will listen to impersonating characters (actors speaking the target language), who are well known, speaking a dialogue (source text) that does not belong to their culture. In this respect, the issue of culture may explain the failure of *Police Academy*, according to Maluf (2005):

The reasons for the success of the Mexican soap and the failure of the otherwise very popular *Police Academy* film series to attract a wide audience in Arabic were cultural. The plots and dialogues of the former were culturally acceptable to Arab audiences as possible Arab stories with Arab actors, while the latter were seen as a contrived translation of plots and dialogues that had no bearing on Arab reality.

Abu Samah, who is quoted in Maluf, proposed that even the Latin American soaps which were success in the Arab world needed some editing to make them suit Arab culture. This claim, in fact, should be reconsidered, simply because editing or adapting a foreign film or soap opera of one culture to suit a different culture does not guarantee its success as we will see in the case of *The Simpsons* (Groening, 1989).

#### **2.5.1.2    Aesthetic barriers**

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The issue of aesthetics in dubbing is extremely important and contributes to the success or failure of a dubbed audiovisual material. This is because dubbing creates a kind of interaction between the viewers and the impersonating voices, especially if the viewers are familiar with these voices. As a result, if the actions and words contradict the image that the viewers have drawn in their minds about those characters, then a barrier between the viewers and the audiovisual material may result. Fodor (1976: 15) maintains that a sophisticated public which connects speech and facial expressions immediately feels the contradiction between French facial expressions and English voices subsequently dubbed on to it. To illustrate, the most popular translated and watched audiovisuals in the Arabic-speaking world are action ones and the actors in such audiovisuals are usually known to the audience who would like to watch them speaking their original language. In other words, to listen to Arnold Schwarzenegger or Van Damme speaking Arabic will be a constant reminder

to the audience that what they are watching is foreign. Similarly, this could be another factor that contributed to the failure of *Con Air* (West, 1997), *Air Force One* (Petersen, 1997), and *The Rock* (Bay, 1996) where the audience thought that it was funny to listen to Harrison Ford and Sean Connery, for example, speaking Egyptian Arabic. Dubbing into Arabic, especially Standard, may have more to offer with history, social and romantic plots. The reason is that such genres may sometimes have common ground with Arab culture and may sound more realistic than action films especially that they talk about human relations (hatred, love, envy, etc.). Therefore, when such characters speak Arabic, they sound acceptable and convincing. This could be one of the reasons for the success of Mexican and, nowadays, Turkish romantic soap operas dubbed into Arabic. Moreover, MBC Max has recently dubbed different history films into MSA to be broadcast on its channel in 2010. Examples of such films are *Kingdom of Heaven* (Scott, 2005), *Brave Heart* (Gibson, 1995), *Lord of the Rings* (Jackson, 2001), *Troy* (Petersen, 2004), *Alexander* (Stone, 2004), and *The Godfather* (Coppola, 1972).

### 2.5.1.3 Synchronization in dubbing

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Fodor (1976: 9) sets three requirements for dubbing to be successful. These are related to content, lip (phonetic) synchrony, and character synchrony:

The chief requirements of a satisfactory synchronization involve a faithful and artistic rendering of the original dialogue, an approximately perfect unification of the replaced sounds with visible lip movements, and bringing the style of delivery in the new version into optimal artistic harmony with the style of acting. (1976: 9)

Content synchrony can be said to be related to a good translation or writing of the script into the target language. It is not an easy task at all since it is considered as an art which needs a skilled artist. Its importance results from the fact that the target text will be the major element in determining the success of audiovisuals. The reason is that some violations in lip synchronization and character synchrony can be tolerated, but content that does not speak to the target text audience or which is grossly violated (changed to suit the target culture) is not acceptable. This is true if we consider again the failure of the *Police Academy* series which concerned the

dialogue as well as the plot neither of which sounded all familiar to the target culture, a feature which El-Rashidi (2005) also identified with regard to the failure of *The Simpsons* as we will see.

Reasons for poor content and script in the target language vary. One of them is the fact that languages are different from each other in terms of length. Texts of certain languages become shorter or longer than they were when translated into the target language. Fodor (1976: 78-79) noted for example that Chinese texts are much shorter than their Hungarian versions. Similarly, Arabic is known to be a rhetorical and poetic language, having lengthy expressions. When synchronization is to be achieved in such cases, then short texts will have to be prolonged and long ones shortened to synchronize with the spoken utterances. This may affect the quality of good dialogue which is why an 'artist' is needed for this task rather than a translator. Commenting on his film *The Message* (Akkad, 1977) (more on this commentary can be found in the special features of the film), Akkad, speaking English, maintains that the reason why he chose to make two different versions of it, one in Arabic and one in English was:

Because Arabic and English are two separate and different languages. You cannot dub Arabic into English nor English into Arabic. It is very difficult for the lips' movements. So, when I budgeted the film, I budgeted it on the basis that the Arabic version would require a few extra takes. But I was wrong. It took us much longer, and there is no way you can learn this from anybody else because this is the first time done, because the style of acting in Arabic is a bit different; it is more dramatic, more poetic and more lengthy.

Another reason for poor target text in dubbing can be related to the translation process. Since script translation involves the job of both the translator and the adaptor, loss may result. It is not a loss that happens during translation only, but rather one that happens after the translation as well. When the adaptor wants to adapt the translation to the lip movements of the original dialogue, then s/he may not recognize the necessary changes that the translator has made and, as a result, this may also lead to another adaptation loss.

The last reason for a poor target text is financial. The dubbing process costs a lot of money, most of which goes to actors and actresses. Unfortunately, the translator gets the least money despite the hard task s/he carries out. Diaz-Cintas considers this a problem that is worth taking into consideration: "Many directors still have to wake up to the reality that the translation process is an artistic factor on which more control needs to be exerted and in which it is worthwhile to invest the necessary amount of money - which generally is very little compared with the overall budget" (1999: 67).

As far as phonetic synchrony is concerned, Fodor (1976: 21) defines it as the visible sound formation in the picture and the purport of the source text which are the decisive factors in shaping the target sounds and their sequences in correct speech. Luyken et al (1991: 137) also stress that "The prime requirement of lip-sync dubbing is that it should be 'in sync' which is a basic requirement for any film and television programme in which people are seen to be speaking." Barbe (1996: 260) states that "If viewers notice that sounds do not correlate or are 'out of sync', a quantity of energy must be expended away from the action." Others, such as Martinez (2004) and Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2006), argue that lip synchronization is a basic requirement in dubbing.

On the other hand, Rowe (1960: 116) proposes that the audience is often concerned with lip-lip synchronization rather than the translation. This requires adjusting the standards on the approach of the dubbing writer. So, Rowe throws the ball into the audience's court and indicates that the more tolerant the audience is regarding lip-lip synchronization the greater the writer's ability to approach translation standards of fidelity and quality. Similarly, Myers (1973: 58) is in favour of the Italian school which favours fidelity over synchrony because he believes that creative dubbing is one which does not stress sync but, in its stead, a true adaptation of the original script and performances. Vöge (1977: 120) also maintains that when synchrony is an overruling requirement in dubbing, then this automatically implies a translation which is less than faithful to the original. Delabastita (1989: 203) noted that the problem of dubbing or even film translation in general is reduced to the problem of synchrony when this should not be so.

Zabalbeascoa (1997: 329-332) successfully attracts attention to the issue of lip-lip synchronization. He argued that both audience and scholars have considered AVT only a problem of lip synchronization, thus making it a unique feature of this

kind of translation and making all other 'problems' minor or not even seen or taken into account. More importantly he considers translation as a matter of priorities and restrictions which will have to be fixed anew for each task. If priorities are viewed vertically on a scale of importance, then one can say that a particular priority is also a restriction on all the priorities that are below it. Lack of tolerance from the audience regarding lip-lip synchronization is considered a restriction because the greater the tolerance the weaker the need for lip-lip synchronization and the wider the range of possible solutions. This is also stressed by Barbe (1996: 260) who argues that tolerating lip-lip synchronization has an advantage: "Being out of sync has also inspired humorous usage in films such as *The Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* and *Police Academy*, as well as in the British television show *Whose Line Is It Anyway?*"

As can be noticed, the issue of synchronization is considered to be an obstacle in the way of translators since taking it into consideration will restrict them. However, in the end, despite the fact that synchronization can be a restriction, dubbing can still be carried out, and may be successful providing the plot is retained. Lip-Lip synchronization is never perfect and a degree of mismatch between lip movements and dubbed dialogue is inevitable. This is not to ignore the fact that any lack of lip-lip synchronization in countries that have zero tolerance in this regard, such as the Arab countries, will only deepen the gap between the audience and audiovisuals, a gap that may have already been created by character synchrony.

Character synchrony in dubbing means the harmony between the performing characters and the dubbing voices of the characters in terms of temper, reaction, body movement and language. Fodor (1976: 72) describes this problem as psychological. To put it differently, if there is a contradiction between what we see and what we hear, then a kind of discomfort will result. He stresses that:

There must be certain correspondences between the source and target sound sequences in point of phonetic attributes such as individual timbre, pitch, intensity and speech tempo, peculiarities which are revealed to the spectators by the exterior, temperament and deportment of the actor impersonating the character. If the correspondence is of the right degree we have synchrony in character, if it falls short of a certain level we experience dischrony in character. (1976: 72)

One example of this is when a young character is dubbed by an older one or when an evil character is dubbed by a romantic one. Another example can be taken from the history film *The Lion of the Desert* (1981) by Akkad. Antony Quinn, who played 'Umar al-Mukhtār, was dubbed by Abdullah Ghaith, a famous Egyptian actor. Ghaith, four years prior to the production of this film, played Ḥamza, the uncle of the Prophet, in *The Message*. Ghaith's voice was suitable for dubbing Antony Quinn ('Omar al-Mukhtar) since it has the rhythm of not only an old but also a confident and courageous hero who played Ḥamza few years earlier. Had Akkad chosen another actor who did not have the charisma of Ghaith, then character dischrony would have occurred. Moreover, it is worth remembering that soap operas which are dubbed into Arabic are usually able to escape character dischrony because the actors of the source operas are not known to the Arabic-speaking audiences; so any character dischrony will pass unnoticed, a factor that adds to their success.

### 2.5.2 Arabic varieties and the possibility of dubbing

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Now that we have an idea about the technical barriers to dubbing in general and into Arabic in particular, it is time to turn to barriers concerned with translation and language transfer. It was discussed at the beginning of this chapter that dubbing, in comparison to subtitling, is able to render the source text's dialects, censor its swear words, and maximize humorous effects. For example, whereas in dubbing it is possible to make use of different dialects, it is difficult to do so in subtitling where MSA is mainly used. This does not mean that some of the dialect features cannot be reproduced in subtitles; but their use will be limited and less effective, let alone the fact that they are difficult to read. And as was previously stated in chapter three, the subtitler Eija Pokkinen cited in Jaskanen (2001) maintains: "I would like to use dialects in translations, but they are considered to be difficult to read".

Satellite technology has enabled the Arabic-speaking audiences, particularly children, to have access to all kinds of audiovisuals including Egyptian-dubbed cartoons which non-Egyptian children find difficulty in understanding. The reasons for this may vary, but one important reason is related to dialectal differences, and the difference between MSA that children learn at school and Egyptian Arabic that they do not speak or even hear in their daily life. In this light, the reason(s) for the failure of *The Simpsons*, which was mentioned above and which was linked to culture, has

to be reconsidered. It is also possible that the Egyptian dialect was another factor as we will see in chapter 5.

What can also be noticed nowadays is the boom in dubbing Turkish soap operas into Syrian Arabic after the popularity of dubbed Mexican ones into MSA. But this is not the case with films. Maluf (2005) argues that Hollywood films have not been dubbed into what he calls 'vernacular Arabic' but he does not state why. However, he gives a reason for not using Egyptian for dubbing:

While the Egyptian dialect is the most widely understood form of colloquial Arabic, precisely because of the diffusion of film and popular lyrics from that country, the fact that Egypt was not dubbing Hollywood productions meant that dialect was not being used for that purpose.

What probably is meant is that the Arabic-speaking audiences are not used to listening to or watching audiovisuals that are dubbed into Egyptian dialect, even if that dialect is popular. Formal Arabic seems to give weight to drama or history audiovisuals in particular, something that dialects may fail to achieve. Moreover, when dubbed into MSA, such audiovisuals may address a wider audience: people who do not have a good idea about a certain dialect. In the case of animations, children who are probably ignorant of that dialect would probably prefer MSA.

On the other hand, Maluf (2005) proposes that despite the popularity of Mexican and Brazilian soaps or telenovelas, their use of MSA in dialogue is seen as stilted and remains the butt of popular jokes. What one may recall here is Maluf's statement earlier that Egyptian was not used in dubbing because it was not being used for that very reason. Maluf probably means that neither MSA nor colloquial are effective in dubbing. However, the successful dubbing of Turkish soaps into Syrian dialect which started in 2007 has proven to Maluf that colloquial can really be used in soap operas. But the question is why audiovisuals which were dubbed into Egyptian were not as successful as the dubbed Turkish telenovelas? It should be mentioned that the audience for soap operas is different from that for films and sitcoms. It is mainly, composed of housewives. Moreover, Syrian dialect is becoming more popular than both Egyptian and MSA in the audiovisual market. Kaadi, the vice president of Tanweer Company in Syria (see Appendix D), maintains that "if these series (Turkish telenovelas) were dubbed in MSA or Egyptian dialect, they wouldn't



have had that success.” However, some argue that the success of these Turkish soaps has nothing to do with dialect but rather with the plot (mostly romantic), beautiful Turkey and good direction: “The success of the Turkish soap operas has nothing to do with the Syrian dialect but rather with the interesting story and nice scenery” (Hayek, interview, Appendix E).

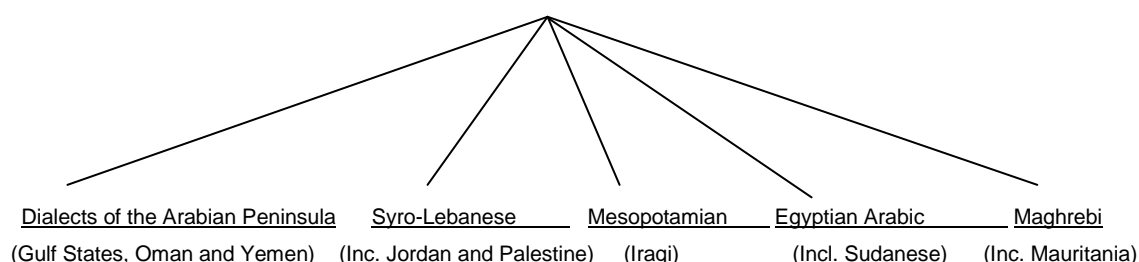
In summary, culture should not be the only factor to take the blame for the failure of films such as *Police Academy* and cartoons such as *The Simpsons*. One reason is that cartoons, for example, have been dubbed into MSA for over forty years and proved to be successful and culture has never been a barrier. Cultural differences do exist but censorship and adaptation bridge the gap. So, why did adaptation fail to do so now? Consequently, it may be worth investigating the possibility of dubbing audiovisuals into Arabic dialects and examining the barriers to this. In order to do this, we should first look into the varieties of Arabic to see if they constitute a barrier themselves.

#### **2.5.2.1 Arab regional dialects or language varieties**

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Hudson (1996: 37) looks into the main types of language variety: language, dialect, and register and concluded that the concept (language X) has no part to play either in linguistics or even in sociolinguistics. All we need, according to Hudson, is the notion ‘variety X’ and the observation that a given variety may be relatively similar to some varieties while relatively different to other varieties. The linguistic items are what makes the difference between one variety and another because a variety of a language is a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution. However, in the case of the Arabic varieties we have mostly geographical rather than social distribution, although there are various sociolects within Arabic. According to Lodge (1993: 16), barriers separating groups of people from one another may be geographical, but they may also be divisions of social class. While in some countries, such as England, social class takes precedence over geography, in others, it is geography that is the determinant of speech (see Hudson 1996: 42). The ‘family tree model’ (Figure 2.2), adapted from Hudson (ibid: 37) allows us to show how closely a number of varieties spoken at present are related to one another geographically. Versteegh (1997: 169-172) classifies Arabic dialects into five main categories under

each of which come a variety of dialects that are geographically close to each other and thus have many things in common:



**Figure 2.2: Family Tree Model**

The ‘wave theory’, which replaced the family tree model, is based on the assumption that changes in language spread outwards from centres of influence to the surrounding areas in much the same way that a wave spreads from the place where the stone is dropped into the pool. This theory explains why *isoglosses* (from Greek iso- ‘same’ and gloss- ‘tongue’) intersect by postulating different geographical foci for the spread of different items (Hudson, 1980: 39). For example, people in the Gulf states speak the same dialect with very slight differences. In the North African (Maghreb) countries, people also have very similar dialects or language varieties. The same applies to the northern region (the Levant). However, this theory is partially non-applicable when we talk about the differences between these dialects as a whole. In other words, it is much easier for a Lebanese to understand a Syrian than an Algerian.

It should be emphasized here that talking about dialects in relation to the countries shown in the tree model above is in fact far from precise. The dialect continuum means that boundaries between dialects are rarely clear-cut. People ought to be careful when talking about comparing the differences and similarities of, say, a Lebanese and Syrian dialect, especially of those dialects that are on the borders of both countries since the divisions are in fact political. That is to say, borders divide people of a certain region, who originally spoke one dialect which later became two: a Syrian, for example, and a Lebanese.

So far, the regional distribution of the dialects is clearer. Now if the wave theory stops working beyond a certain region, then how do dialects start to differ? As mentioned before, dialects differ for various reasons. One of them is due to where

civilization began (it is known that the development of civilization affects the development of language) and the contribution of a certain region to that civilization. The second is related to the influence of the non-Arab ('Ajam) or foreigners who migrated to the Arab countries for various reasons and whose influence is strongly felt in the west (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, and Mauritania) and less in the east (the Gulf). Trade, colonization and globalization also affected the spread of dialects. Johnstone (1967) argues that before the rise of the oil industry, an important influence on the population of the Gulf countries was Persia. Many Persian families had been long-established in those countries and spoke Arabic as their first language. Holes (2001: xv) listed this foreign vocabulary together with the Arabic that is used in the region and argued that:

The sea has brought a succession of short-lived and long-term foreign cultural and linguistic influences, beginning with the Sumerians five millennia ago, and continuing virtually unbroken with the Babylonians, Persians, Indians, Portuguese, up to the arrival of the British in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (2001: xv)

But in brief, it can be said that the major differences among Arabic varieties are mainly related to semantics and syntax as will be detailed below.

#### **2.5.2.2    *Syntactic differences between Arabic dialects***

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There are many books written about the syntax of Arabic dialects. What can be noticed is that almost all of these books talk about one particular dialect at a time. It is indeed hard to find a book that compares two dialects or more, except in two cases. The first is a brief handbook of 18 pages by Crewe (1973) who compared the Sudanese to the other main dialects (Egyptian, Moroccan, Syrian and Arabian dialects) in terms of phonology and syntax. This cannot be said to be comprehensive. The second is Brustad's (2000) *The Syntax of Spoken Arabic*, which can be considered a useful and interesting book that is worth considering in some details.

Brustad (2000) deals with four basic Arabic dialects and compares their grammatical aspects. It seems apparent that the writer has chosen these dialects because they are the most common in the Arabic-speaking countries. Each one

involves a geographic dimension which is essential to the dialect. For example, Syrian is a widespread dialect in the northern region which includes Jordan, Lebanon and Palestine. Egyptian is also widespread in the Arabic-speaking countries and is fairly close to the Sudanese. Kuwaiti is also widespread in the Gulf and is very close to Saudi, Iraqi, Qatari, Bahraini, Omani, and Emirate speech. As for Moroccan, it is widespread in the western part of the Arab world countries and is relatively close to Tunisian, Libyan, Algerian and Mauritanian. This is why the study can be said to be comprehensive in terms of the major dialects it covers and shows the effort that Brustad (2000) makes to compare and contrast the syntactic features of these dialects. She is trying to prove that there are not such big differences, syntactically, between the dialects of Arabic. She is also trying to refute the claim that Arabic dialects are mutually unintelligible and that formal Arabic is the only language which is common among Arabs. The following grammatical aspects are taken from her book, covering many important syntactical issues in the structure of dialects and showing how complicated the differences are.

*TEMPORAL VERBS.* With regard to temporal verbs, for example, Brustad (2000: 215), argues that “temporal verbs vary to a great extent in the four dialects”. One can hardly find a temporal verb in a dialect that is in common with another verb in another dialect. Some of these colloquial verbs are derived from MSA but they do not always convey the same meaning. For example, *قعد* in MSA means ‘sit down’ but in some dialects it could also mean (unexpectedly) continue or ‘keep doing’.

*MOOD.* As far as modality is concerned, compare the following examples (Brustad, 2000: 235). The confusion arises from the fact that the same sentence has two different meanings in Egyptian and Syrian:

<b>E</b>	بتشربي شاي؟
	Do you drink tea?
<b>S</b>	بتشربي شاي؟
	Would you like to drink some tea?

*FUTURE AND INTENTIVE MOODS.* Brustad (2000: 242-4) maintains that each dialect uses different forms of future and intentive particles that are completely different from other dialects’ particles, except in the case of the Syrian, Kuwaiti, Egyptian and Sudanese *ب*, and may be completely different from MSA.

*INDICATIVE MOOD.* This represents action as a realized process, depending on the lexical aspect of the verb, habitual, progressive, or stative. The following example given by Brustad (ibid: 247) of the Moroccan durative indicative mood “ما يَخرجش من الدار” (She does not go out of the house) can be interpreted in an imperative sense in Egyptian (Do not go out of the house!). Moreover, it may be important to highlight that these features have no simple connection with MSA; something that makes it more difficult for others to understand their meanings.

*NEGATION.* Like future and intensive moods, negation is even more complicated in spoken Arabic. This is due to the different types of negation and to the various grammatical structures and particles (equal to the English ‘not’ and ‘no’) used to express it. Mitchell (1956: 43), for example, distinguished between five negative particles in Egyptian, mainly *مش*, *مافيش*, *لوش*, *ما...لوش*, *مانيش*, and *ما* preceding and *ش* following the word negated; Cowell (1964: 383-88) classified negation in Syrian Arabic according to four negative particles: *ما*, *لا*, *مو*, and *مال-* and *مان-*; and Holes (1990: 71-3) divided negation in Gulf Arabic into two categories, ‘sentence negation’ and ‘constituent negation.’ As for Moroccan, negation is even more complicated as the following two examples from Brustad show (2000: 278-305). Brustad argues that the focus of negation in Moroccan changes according to the activity. In other words, in the first sentence below the focus is on ‘going’ since the speaker is negating a presupposition that he was actually going to work, while in the second sentence this is not the case and thus the focus of negation is on ‘working’:

ما ماشيش نخدم غداً

I am not *going* to work tomorrow

ماش نخدمش غدا

I am not *working* tomorrow

Consider the following negation from Moroccan as well:

ماشي كنت ف الدار؟

Weren't you in the house?

In many other dialects this sentence can be interpreted differently such as: ‘Were you walking in the house?’ as the word *ماشي* means ‘walking’ in MSA, ‘OK then’ or/and ‘walking’ in Syrian, ‘nothing’ in Omani, and so on.

### 2.5.2.3 Semantic differences between dialects

Al-Madani (1992: 155) maintains that around 80% of the spoken Arabic is standard, whereas al-Tannīr (1987: 5), on the other hand, could gather only around 1400 words from spoken Arabic that are basically standard. Regardless of these figures, some examples from various dialects to clarify the semantic differences these dialects will be given.

One of the examples is the noun 'fight' when used to describe people brawling. In Syrian this is 'ماتله', in Saudi 'هوشه' and in Egyptian 'خناءه'. The three words are different from each other and also different from the original word in MSA which is 'مُشاجرة'. Moreover, the word 'fight' has different forms in Saudi colloquial, depending on the region where it is spoken. The MSA sentence 'لن يكون بمقدوري' or 'لن أستطيع' or 'I will not be able to' becomes 'مارح فيني' in Syrian and which literally translates 'I will not in me'. See Brustad (2000: 195).

Coming back to Gulf dialects in the Arabic peninsula where Arabic is supposed to have preserved its purity for historical and geographical reasons, we find that these dialects have a significant foreign vocabulary which is also hard to understand, sometimes. Consider this example from de John (1958: 73) where the words that have no bearing in MSA are written in bold:

اريد اروح السوق واشتري خام.  
أي جنس تريدین؟ **چیت**؟  
اريد **چیت** حق **نفانيفي** و شيء حق **دشداشتين** لأجل محمد. احب هذاك, الوار كم؟  
هذا الذراع **روبيتين** و نص: يصير الوار خمس **روبيات**.  
عجيب غال! يريد **بنزات** كثيره.

I want to go to the bazaar today and buy material. What kind do you want? **Calico**? I want calico for my **dressess** and something for two **gowns** for Muhammed. I like that. A **yard** is how much? This, a cubit is two and a half **rupees**; a yard will be five **rupees**. Oh, oh! Expensive! It takes much money (many **baizes**).

As is the case with other dialects, Egyptian has also got a range of vocabulary that is not related to Standard Arabic as we will see in the following section. Moreover, this dialect has also been influenced by the Turks, the English presence and to some

extent, the French. As a result, it could not escape, like other dialects, the impact of foreign languages. Examples from Phillott and Powell (1926: 703/363/565) are helpful in illustrating such this point. Again foreign words are marked in bold:

- أطم الترك كانت التيله دايره في البلاد.
- إن شاء الله أراك في التياترو الليلة (دي).
- جيت في الوابور مش في الترامواي.

- In the days of the Turks the '**cat and nine tails**' was at work up and down the country.
- Hope to see you in the **theatre** tonight.
- I came by **train**, not **tram**.

To sum up, the pages above have aimed at showing some of the differences between Arabic dialects. It is noticeable how all Arabs speak and understand one formal standard language in formal contexts and how they adopt another daily spoken variety that has its own grammatical and syntactic aspects and which might not be understood by others. This explains how a group of friends from different Arab countries who are speaking their own dialects switch to something much closer to MSA when they do not understand each other at some point. Now that we have an idea about these differences, it is time to see if they can still be used to dub source language dialects without creating a barrier, and consequently solve the problem of subtitling such dialects into Arabic. This issue will be further investigated by analysing two case studies: an action film (*Con Air*) and an animation series (*The Simpsons*) that dubbed into Egyptian. The latter was intended to target a large audience all over the Arab world. It is with this that we start the discussion.

### 2.5.3 Literature on dubbing

Despite the fact that dubbing goes back to the 1920s, the literature on this practice did not start until thirty years later. Dubbing, according to Rowe (1960: 116), is a kind of cinematic netherworld filled with phantom actors who speak through the mouths of others and ghostly writers who have no literary soul of their own, either as creative authors or translators. Myers (1973: 56) suggests that the purpose of dubbing is to

render a reasonably faithful adaptation of a foreign film while attempting to achieve that very elusive goal of 'perfect sync'. Fodor (1976: 9) describes it as a procedure of cinematography which consists of a separate and new sound recording of the text of a film translated into the language of the country in which it is to be shown. Luyken et al. (1991: 73) define dubbing as the replacement of the original speech by a voice track which is a faithful translation of the original speech and which attempts to reproduce the timing, phrasing and lip movements of the original. Dries (1995: 9) proposes that dubbing can best be described as the technique of covering the original voice in an audiovisual production by another like it.

As far as the issue of using language varieties in dubbing is concerned, Rowe (1960) tried to answer the question about whether it is possible to retain the flavour of the original text with the actors affecting accents and using foreign locutions, or to create the illusion that the script was originally written in the dubbed language. He suggests writing in an accent for the character speaking in dialect, leaving the rest of the cast to speak the standard language. With regard to dubbing into Arabic, this suggestion cannot be fully implemented since it would sound odd to make an actor speak standard Arabic and another speak colloquial, unless there was a purpose. But if the two characters speak two different colloquials, this would be more convincing.

Maluf (2005) maintains that the language which is most common in the Arab world is MSA. Moreover, though this is not favoured for dubbing, neither is colloquial. This hypothesis will be put to test in chapter 5. According to Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2006), dubbing represents a dubious homogenization of other cultures and much of a film's meaning can be lost. One example is the dubbing of a dialect into standard language which may result in loss, but is something which is to be expected in any process of translation. Indeed, this is what happens in dubbing into MSA for reasons that are unavoidable. (see chapter 5).

Regarding character synchrony and the role it plays in a successful dubbing, Fodor (1976) describes this technique as a psychological aspect in dubbing and stressed that it is essential for there to be a correspondence between the source and target sounds. If the voice of the dubbing actor does not match the personality and deportment of the visible character, then character dischrony is likely to occur.

Similarly, Dries (1995: 9) argues that dubbing should create the perfect illusion of allowing the audience to experience the production in their own language



without diminishing any of the characteristics of the language, culture and national background of the original production. Such a perfect illusion should be delivered by actors. But what happens is that sometimes, as Meyer-Dinkgräfe's (2006) suggests, a few major dubbing stars speak with the same voice in different films, which results in the confusion of the audiences who, once they see Tom Hanks, will think of Kevin Kline or Bill Murray because they are all dubbed by Arne Elsholtz. The issue of character synchrony and its influence on the success of a dubbed film will be examined in chapter 5.

The issue of culture and its effect on dubbing is stressed by Barbe (1996) who maintains that changes are effected to make the original text suit the target culture where a translation could deviate markedly from the English version, but despite that:

Experiments have shown that most film-goers can easily distinguish between a German original and a dubbed version. The dubbed version seems artificial. (1996: 261)

Similarly, Maluf (2005) examines the commercial and cultural reasons that make dubbing into Arabic almost non-existent apart from dubbing certain Latin American soaps and children's cartoons. The first long feature film that was dubbed into 'standard' Arabic in 1999 was *Police Academy* (Wilson, 1984). It was not a success and the reasons, according to Abou Samah as cited in Maluf, were cultural as the plots and dialogues had no bearing on Arab reality. The objective of any good dubbing, according to Maluf, is precisely for viewers to fail to notice, or at least to forget, or to suppress the fact that they are viewing a translation of the original production.

Again, the impact of culture on dubbing into Arabic will also be put to experiment. It seems that while culture can play a role in the success or failure of a dubbed film, the degree of cultural impact is very little as we will see in chapter 5.

But despite these difficulties that dubbers may face, there might be some advantages to this practice. For example, Zitawi (1995) and Zitawi and Athamneh (1999) uncovered mistakes in the dubbing of cartoons into Arabic. They examined 56 episodes of children's animated pictures shown on television in Jordan and other Arab countries in terms of accuracy of translation and faithfulness to the original text. Lexical errors constituted 45.00% of the total number of errors, syntactic errors

constituted 32.50% of the total errors, and idiomatic errors amounted to 22.50%, which “can be attributed to the translator’s ignorance of the meaning of some idiomatic expressions, carelessness, and/or lack of attention to the context of the SL text”.

Zitawi’s article (2003) also deals with the way idiomatic expressions are translated in children’s cartoons and the strategies that can be adopted in this regard. The scholar analyses the translation of each idiomatic expression on the light of translation theory. She examines the strategies that translators use, such as dynamic translation, naturalization/localization, addition, deletion, and word-for-word translation. These strategies are used in accordance with lip synchronization and cultural considerations. The majority of the idioms (55) were translated using the dynamic strategy. Only two idioms were translated literally.

It could be said that the most important advantage of dubbing into Arabic is that it hides all obscene words and any translation mistakes. A comparison between subtitled and dubbed versions of the same film (*Con Air*) in chapter 5 will try to show how translators dealt with both versions in this regard.

To conclude, character synchrony and the extent of cultural differences contribute to the success or failure of a dubbed material. Moreover, despite the fact that dubbing disguises swear and taboo words, preserves a nation’s language and allows a space for transferring source language varieties, it is still not as popular as subtitling for reasons that have to do mainly with character synchrony, culture and high costs.

## 2.6 Subtitling versus Dubbing

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Myers’ 3-page article (1973) examines the debate on whether to subtitle or to dub. For those who favour subtitling over dubbing such as the Americans, the reason is that they can enjoy the original performance. Myers was not convinced by this point of view and argued against subtitling for the following reasons: it is not possible in subtitling to title every spoken word due to the limited space available on the screen; nuances are lost as well unless there is an excellent subtitler who is expert at condensation; reading a line is not the same as hearing it; it is irritating to have to keep referring from title to screen in order to keep up with the action. Moreover,

subtitles are lost against a white or light background. The alternative for Myers is creative dubbing that does not stress synchronization but attempts a true adaptation of the original dialogue.

Vöge (1977) notices that a survey conducted in 1974 by the Netherlands Broadcasting Foundation shows that those who are in favour of subtitling do not trust dubbing as it is not authentic. He added that in homogenous films (films which achieve coherence between language and place): "it is difficult to replace the language spoken in such a film by the language of the audience, as such replacement involves a distortion of the reality of language and place" (p. 123). Another disadvantage of dubbing is the cultural gap which exists between the audience and the film which may only accentuate the incongruity of dubbing whereas in subtitling, the spoken text remains intact but is accompanied by translation at the bottom of the screen. Naturally, subtitling will be especially successful in the case of films made in a relatively well-known language. The only disadvantage of subtitling for Vöge is the abbreviation of the film text.

Reid (1978) argues that subtitling is an intelligent solution because the viewer is an intelligent person and it makes an appeal to his intelligence. Dubbing, on the other hand, is easier to watch, yet the intelligent viewer will want to know: what did the speaker really say. Dubbing is more suitable for children than adults, Reid argues. The reason why subtitling is favoured over dubbing is because spoken language is more than words. We do not usually judge a person by what he says but rather by the way s/he says it. So, subtitling is a good method for rendering the original message since it does not interfere with the original dialogue and body language as dubbing does.

In another article, Reid (1986: 12) proposes that the first thing that comes to a person's mind when foreign language feature films are mentioned is the argument of subtitling versus dubbing: "How comical to hear Robert Redford speak German" or "How ridiculous to read a film rather than watch it." The whole issue, according to Reid, is that in some films the language is part and parcel of the whole product, whereas in other films the linguistic setting makes little difference. For example, films in which the nationality or cultural group to which people belong plays an important part, probably benefit from subtitling rather than dubbing.

Ivarsson (1992: 17-9) argues that when dubbing is done well, it is difficult to distinguish it from the original. Moreover, in dubbing, the picture is not affected and

the audience, even the illiterate, will understand the dialogue easily. However, the original text can be changed or censored for cultural, political, and lip-lip synchronization reasons without the audience knowing, let alone the fact that the audience is not hearing the voices of the original actors. On the other hand, subtitling can be disturbing because it obstructs the picture and the subtitles flit in and out. The translator, furthermore, may make mistakes that are obvious to everyone with any knowledge of the language. However, in subtitling one can hear the original sound with the original pauses, rhythms of the words, and intonation. In fact, language is more than speech. Gestures, body language, facial expressions are best accompanied by the original dialogue. Ivarsson adds that subtitling has the advantage of not interfering with the other subtle and significant sources of information. Above all, subtitling helps people gradually acquire a new language. For these reasons, and in countries where both versions of translation, subtitling and dubbing, are provided, the audience will no doubt go for the former.

Diaz-Cintas (1999) maintains that the fact that it has to accommodate itself to the spatial synchrony where it has a limited space on screen for the subtitles makes subtitling an uphill task for subtitlers. Add to this is the problem of the 'double' effort that has to be made by the audience to both read the subtitles and follow the plot of the film. The corruption of the original picture due to the added material on the screen adds to the challenge. This is not to mention the fact that the spectator is able to compare the original dialogue with the subtitled one and discover the discrepancies, if any. Last, but not least, subtitling suits the educated audience who can master speed-reading. However, one should not be pessimistic. Subtitling is a recommended way to support teaching or learning a language. It is a cheap technique and a quick one. It allows the audience to enjoy the film in its original language.

Dubbing, on the other hand, according to Diaz-Cintas (1999) , is more complicated. Apart from the high costs of this profession, synchronisation constitutes a major challenge in it. It is not only a matter of lip-lip synchronization but of synchronisation between the body language and the voices: intonation. In addition, achieving this lip-lip synchronization will restrict the dubber to produce a more faithful rendering of the original dialogue. Dubbing, moreover, will always remind the audience that what they are watching belongs to a different environment and culture. However, in dubbing there is no need to concentrate on the subtitles and be

distracted from the emotional line of the film. It also affords the illusion that the actors are speaking in their mother tongue, and this is desirable sometimes for reasons of protecting national identity.

Scandura (2004) summarises the findings of a small-scale survey about subtitling and censorship that was conducted in Argentina in 2002. One of the questions asked to viewers was whether they preferred subtitling or dubbing. People aged between 18 and 41 preferred films and sitcoms that are subtitled and 63% preferred subtitling over dubbing because it enables them to listen to the source dialogue and to improve their English. Those who preferred dubbing argued that subtitling interferes with the picture and that dubbing helps them do other things while listening to the dialogue.

In conclusion, despite the fact that neither dubbing nor subtitling is perfect, subtitling seems to be more popular for reasons that are related to authenticity, lower cost, enjoying the original sounds, etc. Such reasons are enough to persuade subtitling companies to favour this method to dubbing. Dubbing, on the other hand, seems to hold less attraction for aesthetic and financial reasons. The financial issue is a burden on TV channels. The aesthetic issue, on the other hand, is usually criticized by the audience as we will see in chapter 5. This is why Reid (1978) is in favour of using dubbing for children rather than adults who may easily spot any discrepancies, and therefore turn the dubbed film into a funny one when it should not be.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

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This chapter has introduced some of the challenges that face translators of film dialogues mainly from English into other languages and the different ways that were adopted to resolve such obstacles. For example, the investigation into whether translators of English-language audiovisuals into other languages, including Arabic, use any translation approach was aimed at realizing the extent to which this may, or may not, affect the quality of a translation. Moreover, as subtitling imposes certain constraints which are related to technical and linguistic factors, this tends to affect the quality of subtitles. Added to these factors is the cultural gap that exists between the SL and the TL. Culture, together with language, affects the transfer of the source dialogue's language varieties, its swear and taboo words as well as humour. Dialects

are difficult to replace by equivalent ones and are also difficult to read. As for euphemising and omitting swear words, and taking into consideration that this is frequently used almost worldwide, this tends not to affect the message of the audiovisual material, unless such words are essential to the characterization and to the plot. Yet this remains unproven. Humour, the most complicated aspect of translation in subtitling, seems to be approached differently by different subtitlers. Most of them opt for equivalence and pragmatic theories to achieve maximum results.

Dubbing facilitates different results for the audience who can easily follow the dubbed material, and translators, who can censor taboos, and use TL dialects to dub the SL ones, and therefore, have more space to express the message of the ST. Despite that, whether dubbing into Arabic is more efficient and more successful than subtitling in dealing with such translation issues has not yet been proven.

Finally, it is hoped that this literature has established a background about the problems encountered by translators in the subtitling and dubbing of English-language audiovisuals into other languages that will help in laying down the basics for the argument of this study.

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## *Chapter 3*

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### **METHODOLOGY**

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#### **3.0 Overview of chapter**

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This chapter uses qualitative research method based on a case study methodology supported by experiments and interviews. The research also partially benefits from a quantitative approach based on a questionnaire to be justified in this chapter. First, the design of the case study as well as the questionnaire and experiments are outlined. Then, more details about data collection and participants are given. Finally, the validity of the method and the ethical issues of the study are discussed.

#### **3.1 Introduction**

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Previous chapters have established the argument of this study by illustrating its aims and by building on previous studies. Once again, the main aim is to identify and examine the obstacles that result from the translation of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic and to suggest some solutions for these obstacles which are mainly influenced by the technical, cultural and linguistic issues involved in this kind of translation. But the main focus will be on the transfer of dialect, swear words and humour into Arabic and on the resultant difficulties encountered by translators. The solutions suggested, as we will see, will be tested by using both qualitative and quantitative methods. (cf. Adams, 1989; Hansen, et al., 1998; Berger, c1998; Bertrand and Hughes, 2005; Jensen, 2002).

As the audience is the target of these translated audiovisuals, more attention will be paid to them through conducting some experiments, rather than to the analysis of translations, in both identifying the problems and in suggesting solutions.

The audience can be classified into two categories, one of which is aware of the deficiencies of audiovisual translation into Arabic and the other of which has no clue whatsoever about them. This depends on the audience's English level.

## 3.2 The use of qualitative data

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### 3.2.1 Case study design and analysis

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Maxwell (1996: x) proposes that the design is the logic and the coherence of a research project—the components of the research and the ways in which these relate to one another. Choosing a design for this study facilitates the collection and analysis of the data. Since the study selects certain translated audiovisuals to examine, each of these can be said to form a case study. Therefore, this study intends to adopt the case study design as a guideline.

Stake (2000: 47) sees a case study as both a process of inquiry about the case and the product of that inquiry. It is a form of research which is defined by interest in individual cases, not by the methods of inquiry used. Furthermore, de Vaus (2001: 250) suggests that case studies are particularly suited to research problems when the phenomenon in which we are interested either cannot be distinguished from its context or must be seen within its context. An even more precise definition of the case study is Schramm's which is quoted by Yin (2003: 12): "the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result". Moreover, Bertrand and Hughes (2005) define the case study as a method by which a sample is collected and subjected to some form of close scrutiny or study on the assumption that the cases studied are able to tell us something about a more general situation. To put this differently, Yin (ibid: 1) argue that case studies are preferred when 'how' or 'why' questions are being posed. When the how and why are answered, they help us to make a generalization. A case study research, according to de Vaus (ibid: 221), must have a theoretical dimension without which a case study will be of little value for wider generalization. We might begin with a question or a basic proposition, look at real cases and end up with a more specific theory or set of propositions as a result of



examining cases. Finally, George and Bennett (2005: 19) maintain that one of the advantages of case studies is their capacity to foster new hypotheses.

Moreover, the data collection for this research necessitated a period of field work in the Middle East to study some of the companies that subtitle audiovisuals and to carry out the experiments and the interviews. Prior to that, various films and sitcoms were watched in order to become familiar with the quality of the translations and the companies which did them. It was this viewing of films, sitcoms and cartoons which generated the idea for the field work to examine more closely the business and the way it is being run. Then, certain samples were chosen to double check their translation. After that, a smaller number of these audiovisuals were selected to act as pilot studies as will be illustrated below. Only then were the cases decided on.

The cases were selected according to the issues that needed to be addressed. First, to address the problem of translating dialect, *Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983) which utilized dialect for characterization, was chosen. Second, to address the issue of translating swear words and taboos, *London to Brighton* (Williams, 2006) and *Con Air* (West, 1997) were selected. Third, to handle the issue of humour translation, the comedy series *Friends* (Crane and Kauffman, 1995) was also chosen. Finally, and in order to examine the extent to which dubbing into dialects can be a solution to some of the obstacles of subtitling, *The Simpsons* (Groening, 1989) and *Con Air* were reviewed. These were the four case studies selected for analysis.

### 3.2.2 Interviews

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Rubin and Rubin (1995: 1) propose that qualitative interviewing is a great adventure; every step of an interview brings new information and opens windows into the experiences of the people you meet. Interviews constitute a crucial part of all qualitative research. In order to be suitable for the overall design of a thesis, the interviews are meant to be focused and exploratory. To put it differently, Yin (2003: 90) argues that case study interviews are open-ended, enabling the interviewer to ask key respondents about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events. The interview questions designed for this study were semi-structured ones. This constitutes what Yin (2003: 90) calls *focused* interviewing. A focused interview is one in which a respondent is interviewed for a short period of time. It can still be

considered open-ended where the interviewer follows a certain line of questioning to answer the thesis' main questions. Moreover, interviews are considered exploratory when they are meant to uncover particular problems and elicit new information with regard to the topic provided that they are done properly.

The questions used in the semi-structured interviews were simply sub-questions of the main thesis questions:

1- Do translators of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic adopt any translation model or theory that best suits audiovisual translation and helps them best interpret the message of the source audiovisual material? If not, what is the most suitable translation approach to achieve this?

A- Do you rely on a particular translation theory? What is it?

B- Do you agree that audiovisual translation is an adaptation rather than a translation?

2- As dialects of source English-language audiovisuals are not usually rendered into equivalent ones in subtitling into Arabic due to the fact the subtitles are usually written in standard rather than colloquial Arabic, does this have any consequences for the message of the audiovisual material? If yes, can this be avoided?

C- How can English-language dialects be subtitled into equivalent Arabic ones and is it important to do so?

D- Since the only language used in subtitles is MSA, how does this affect the message of an audiovisual material? If there is any loss in message, how can this loss be compensated?

3- To what extent do the translated audiovisuals' messages tend to be affected by censorship? Can translation loss caused by censorship be minimized or compensated for?

E- Does euphemizing swearing and taboo words affect the message of an audiovisual material at all?

F- Taking into consideration the fact that we are living the age of globalization, is it really important to euphemize?

4- Regarding the subtitling of humour, can it have the same effect on the audience as that of the original, and what are the best strategies for achieving this?

G- Is translated humour able to have the same effect that the original text has on the audience and how?

H- To what extent can the translator be free to deliver the message? In other words, which has the priority, translation or humour?

I- Which can better express the humour of the TT, standard or colloquial Arabic?

J- Are puns translatable into Arabic?

5- Can dubbing be an efficient solution for some of the obstacles that subtitlers face, such as the transfer of dialects, swear words and humour into Arabic?

K- Can dubbing solve the problem of subtitling English-language dialects by dubbing those dialects into colloquial Arabic such as Egyptian, for example?

L- Taking into consideration that in dubbing the audience cannot compare between the two texts, the source and the target, can dubbing do a better job with regard to censorship?

M- Is dubbing into colloquial Arabic better able than subtitling into MSA to successfully transfer the humour of English-language audiovisuals and why?

David et al (2004: 88) argues that once a set of questions relating to the key themes is generated, it is necessary to pilot these questions since they are the basis for the researcher's interaction with the interviewees. The interview pilot study was conducted by interviewing a subtitler, Ahmed Khuddro, who has worked in subtitling for over 18 years and runs his own business (SSS) as well as working as a freelancer in London.

After that, the first actual interview was conducted once again with SSS as well as VSI International in London in the summer of 2006 (see Appendices A and B for transcriptions of both interviews). Following that, Gulf Film in Dubai was visited in July 2006 for the same reason (see Appendix C for a transcription of interview). A trip was made again in 2007 to the Middle East which on this occasion proved fruitful as interviews were conducted with both Tanweer, Damascus, and Pro Subtitling, Beirut (see Appendices D and E for transcriptions of interviews). For these

companies' contact details and some titles of audiovisuals translated by these companies see Appendix F.

A big effort was made to conduct an interview with a company in Egypt, especially with Anis Ebeid, but in vein, as they did not seem to be keen on this. The Middle East, especially Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Egypt, is in fact full of subtitling and dubbing companies. This is due to the low wages that translators get in comparison to the wages paid in Western countries for the same job. The three most well known companies in the Arab countries are Anis Ebeid (Egypt), Tanweer (Syria) and Al-Ittihad al Fanni (Lebanon). Other big companies are mainly centred in Western countries such as VSI, IBF, IMS and SSS (London), ECI (London, Los Angeles, and Athens), Titrafilm (Paris) and Filmali (Cyprus) that subtitle and/or dub films for TV channels (Such as Show Time, Orbit, MBC, and ART), Cinemas and DVD shops. There are also tens of small and non-official companies in the Middle East that illegally subtitle films for the local market, not respecting any copyrights.

### **3.3 The use of quantitative data**

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#### **3.3.1 Experiments**

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Hakim (2000: 127) argues that the aim of the research experiment is to study causal links: to assess whether a given factor X has an impact on another factor Y, or whether changes in one variable produce changes in another. Berger (c1998: 97) defines an experiment as a kind of test to: 1) demonstrate that a proposition is true, 2) examine the validity of a hypothesis, 3) discover something that is not known or the utility of something that has not been tried before. The aim of experiments in this research was to mainly see how viewers perceive Arabic subtitles in terms of the quality of translation and the reception of Egyptian dubbed films and animations. The object was supposed to find out more about the nature of the obstacles in subtitling in original translation and the possible solutions for them, mainly by suggesting the functional approach: skopos theory, and applying it to the modified translation when applicable.

Certain audiovisuals were selected for this purpose. Each audiovisual material was considered a case study and was thoroughly investigated. The experiments were carried out as follows: some changes (the changes reflect the researcher's

viewpoints on how to improve the quality of translation) on the original translation were made in the first three cases, *Educating Rita*, *London to Brighton*, *Friends* but *Con Air* was left as it is in both its versions, the subtitled and the dubbed. It was important to see how the original translation differed from the altered version, and thus, observe the influence of obstacles on the translation as well as the validity of the suggested solutions.

For example, with regard to the subtitling of dialect, *Educating Rita* which combines both working and middle class dialects of England was chosen. Two different copies of the film were shown to the viewers, the original translation and the modified one as we will see in the next chapter. The participants were asked to watch the film twice, each time with a different translation.

Similarly, *London to Brighton* was also resubtitled again taking into consideration that all, or most of, the deleted swear words were resubtitled. Some of the euphemised words were translated again in a way that made them as close as possible to the source text while still being inoffensive to the audience. The purpose was to find out if excess omission and euphemism of swear words affects the message and characterisation in a film.

Regarding comedy, three episodes were selected from *Friends* and their subtitles were modified in a way that aimed at improving the quality of humour in the series. As far as dubbing versus dialects is concerned, two copies of *Con Air* were shown to the viewers, an Egyptian dubbed version and a MSA subtitled one. Finally, the participants in all experiments were asked to watch both the original and modified translations and judge which one(s) was better able to deliver the message of the original film or sitcom.

As far as the participants in the experiments were concerned, the groups consisted of 10 individuals who came from different educational backgrounds and different Arab countries. With regard to their age, the participants ranged from 20 to 41 years old. It was also ensured that their level of English did not reach that of native speakers or come close to it. The purpose of this was to ensure that they had to rely on the Arabic subtitles and thus make the experiments more effective and valid. Moreover, only those who liked watching subtitled English-language films and sitcoms were chosen so that they had the experience to choose a suitable translation of the film(s) they watched.

With regard to the pilot study, a group of viewers was asked to watch a number of audiovisuals, one at a time. Then they were asked to answer questions afterwards in order to check if anything was wrong with regard to the viewers' interest in the genres or with regard to the questions themselves. No problems arose and no changes were made to the plan. The pilot audiovisuals that they were requested to watch were *Casino Royale* (action: swear words), *Friends* (comedy: humour), and *This is England* (Meadows, 2006) (drama: dialects).

### 3.3.2 Questionnaire

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A major difference between an experiment and a questionnaire, according to Berger (c1998: 35), is that the latter takes the world as it comes, without trying to alter it, whereas the former systematically alters some aspects of the world in order to see what changes follow. Moreover, Bryman (2004: 133) maintains that another advantage of questionnaires is that they are free of the interviewer effect, unlike interviews. Since the thesis suggests the use of Arabic dialects in dubbing as a solution to the problems that subtitlers face, it was necessary to assess the effectiveness and validity of such a solution: hence the idea of the experiment previously mentioned (*Con Air*) and the questionnaire referred to in this section. The questionnaire aims at finding out the reason(s) for the failure of *The Simpsons*, which was dubbed into Egyptian. It is claimed that the reasons for the failure are cultural rather than translational as we will see in chapter five. If the questionnaire proves that the failure of the animation is due to the Egyptian dialect, then, together with the results of the dialect experiment, this will contribute to the conclusion that using dialect in dubbing may not be the best solution to the issues of subtitling dialect.

Foddy (1993: x) maintains that questions in questionnaires are the foundation stones upon which most contemporary social science rests. Therefore, as questions constitute a crucial component in conducting questionnaires, the researcher must ask questions that elicit useful information on the subject of enquiry. The questionnaire is composed of nine expressions in Egyptian dialect that were used in episode three of the dubbed version of *The Simpsons*. The reason for choosing these expressions from one rather than different episodes is to refute the claim of those who may argue that the researcher chose the most difficult expressions from the 30 episodes that have been dubbed and put them in the questionnaire, and

which as a result, may not provide valid or reliable results simply because having some difficult expressions in the 29 episodes may not affect the overall quality of the translation and therefore of an understanding of the series.

As far as the respondents are concerned, Berger (c1998: 36) argues that the social and economic characteristics of respondents such as sex, age, race, religion and education must be considered before carrying out a questionnaire. Second, the questionnaire was distributed to 200 pupils from different Arab nationalities who ranged from 10 to 18 years old, both males and females. The respondents were chosen from the Arabic schools in the UK. They were simply asked to respond to the Egyptian expressions by indicating if they understood them or not. Then they were asked to describe what they had understood, using the language that was most convenient for them such as MSA, their spoken dialect or even English.

The quantitative method which comprises experiments and a questionnaire is intended to supplement the qualitative data in the study which uses case studies and interviews. Both, qualitative and quantitative data will be used to help in answering the five questions. Generalizations and claims are meant to be formed from these data by interpreting and aggregating instances until general themes emerge. Interpretations and themes can be considered as assertions to be grounded in the data, modified as the research proceeds, and used in the discussion of the findings.

### **3.4 Rigour of study**

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Kirk and Miller (1986: 19) define the concept of reliability as the extent to which a measurement procedure yields the same answer whenever it is carried out. Its goal, according to Yin (2003: 37), is to minimize the errors and biases in a study. In other words, reliability means that the indicator consistently comes up with the same measurement (result) whenever a particular case is repeated. In fact, the research tool is supposed to be consistent and stable enough to become reliable. Moreover, the difference between any sets of results should be very small so that the reliability increases.

Validity, on the other hand, is the extent to which the measurement procedure gives the correct answer. See Kirk and Miller (1986: 19). In fact, as Carmines and Zeller (1979: 16) argued, the issue of validity raises the question, “valid for what purpose?” Thus, one validates not the measuring instrument itself but the measuring

instrument in relation to the purpose for which it is being used. De Vaus (2001: 234) distinguished between internal and external validity in case study design and so did Yin (2003). The former argued that threats to internal validity stem from the danger that factors other than our key variable are producing any changes we observe. Internal validity, as Yin (ibid: 36) put it, is only a concern for causal (or explanatory) case studies in which an investigator is trying to determine whether event *x* led to event *y*.

With regard to external validity, according to de Vaus (2001: 237), case studies have been criticized for lacking such validity since it is argued that a profound understanding of a case provides no basis for generalizing to a wider population beyond that case. In other words, single cases offer a poor basis for generalizing. Yin (2003: 37) argues that case studies rely on analytical generalization where the investigator is striving to generalize a particular set of results to some broader theory. He maintains that since a scientist generalizes from experimental results to theory, an analyst should try to generalize findings to theory. However, this is not automatic according to Yin. A theory must be tested by replicating the findings on a second or third case. Therefore, it is hoped that the 5 cases that were chosen will allow a generalization with regard to the subtitling and dubbing of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic. To put this differently, each of the five case studies contributes to the validity of the generalization drawn and helps investigating to what extent the practicalities of the translation of English-language audiovisuals into Arabic are conditioned by the technical, cultural/ideological and translation conditions in which they are carried out.

### **3.5 Methodological issues and dilemmas**

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There are four obstacles to be underlined with regard to the methodology of this study: researcher bias, the transcription process, the experimental issues and issues related to the questionnaire.

#### **3.5.1 Personal bias**

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Bryman (ibid: 517) maintains that social researchers are sometimes put in the position where they *take sides*, something which is widely pervasive in sociology.



The study can be said to be value-bound in the sense that it is bounded by assumptions and regulated by both cultural ideologies and the researcher's own views. For instance, using the functional approach as a framework in the translation of audiovisuals into Arabic echoes the researcher's belief in its ability to efficiently deliver the message of the source audiovisual material taking into consideration the technical, linguistic and cultural constraints. Similarly, translating more swear words than is usually done and toning up the euphemised ones reflects his view that in doing so, no limits should be crossed and no norms violated. Moreover, discussions of the findings should be understood as the researcher's own interpretation and therefore considered as personal values. For example, the way the interviews were integrated and the way quotes were selected from these interviews can also be read in the same way. So, great care was taken to ensure that the data is interpreted in this way.

### **3.5.2 Transcription issues**

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The situation of transcribing interviews is similar to subtitling in the sense that the spoken word is changed into written. But while in subtitling facial expressions and poor synchronisation of speech can be spotted on screen, it is not possible to do so in the case of recorded interviews where all hesitations, attitudes of surprise, embarrassments, and repetitions are lost. This was also taken into consideration while transcribing the interviews that non-verbal gestures were noted down to assist in the interpretation of the data. Kvale (2003: 284) maintains that attempts at verbatim interview transcriptions produce hybrids, artificial constructs that are adequate to neither the live oral conversation nor the formal style of written texts. Transcriptions are translations from one language to another: what is said in the hermeneutical tradition of translators also pertains to transcribers: translators are traitors.

### **3.5.3 Experiment issues**

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Berger (c1998: 99) argues that experiments have one big problem in the sense that they are artificial. When people know that they are involved in an experiment, this may affect their behaviour. This can indeed be true. Some of the participants in this

study hesitated before they chose one of the two translations observed because they, unfortunately, did not want to say something which may not find favour with the researcher. Therefore, participants were told that both versions were done by some companies in order for their judgment to be unaffected. Moreover, care was taken that each participant's feedback was given in private so that others were not influenced by the opinions of other participants.

#### **3.5.4 Questionnaire issues**

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One serious disadvantage of questionnaires, according to Bryman (2004: 134-5), is the fact that they might not be appropriate for some kinds of respondents. This was indeed a concern that was faced. There was a fear that some of the participants were not familiar with Egyptian Arabic or had never watched Egyptian programmes as this would affect the findings. For this reason, further care was taken to ensure that the respondents were over 10 years old, and had watched Egyptian cartoons or soap operas before in order to guarantee that they are not unfamiliar with this dialect.

### **3.6 Ethical issues**

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Hoyle et al (2002: 520) argue that the researcher should be prepared to justify his procedures, to assure readers that his participants had been treated with dignity, and had left his study with their self-esteem intact and their respect for him and social science enhanced rather than diminished. One of the obstacles that could face qualitative research is the close contact with the people who constitute a part of the research such as interviewees and participants. However, all the interviewees and participants who were informed about the nature of this research, the names and addresses of the University and the supervisor, the title of the thesis, the purpose of the study, and the length of the interviews and experiments. They also gave their consent to publish their and their companies' names. Only one of the interviewees refused to be recorded; so his answers were written down during the interview.

### 3.7 Conclusion

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This case-study based research has been informed by qualitative and quantitative data which were influenced by and collected from different perspectives and sources. These data and their analysis were tested by internal and external validity. The purpose of analysing these audiovisuals is to discover the how of the subtitles (How did the subtitles reflect the message of the audiovisual material or how successful they were in doing so?); the purpose of the interviews is to find the why of the subtitles. The experiments are designed to prove if the how is effective enough. To put it differently, what is intended is to try to uncover how English-language audiovisuals are subtitled into Arabic (text analysis), why are they subtitled the way they are (interviews), to what extent these subtitles are effective in conveying the message of the English-language audiovisuals into Arabic and if there is a possibility for improvement (experiments). In this way it is hoped to show how translation theory is put into practice in the translation of audiovisuals.

In the following chapter, the issues of subtitling dialect, swear words and humour will be discussed by analyzing three case studies. But before we conclude this chapter, it should be emphasized that the case-study design is only one of the methods that could be adopted by researchers. Trying other methods such as surveys, focus groups, and other theories and designs could be even more useful. The reason why surveys were not an option in this study is that, although they are easy to conduct, they are frequently done by many researchers. As for focus groups, the fact that subtitling companies are scattered in different countries makes it difficult to apply this method. .

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## *Chapter 4*

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### **SUBTITLING**

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#### **4.0 Chapter overview**

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This chapter starts the argument of the thesis by analysing and conducting experiments on the data that were collected. In other words, it discusses the thesis questions through implementing the methodology that was adopted and detailed in the previous chapter. It begins by presenting the first obstacle in subtitling: dialects (Research Question 2). Then it discusses the issue of subtitling swear and taboo words (Research Question 3). After that, it investigates the issue of subtitling humour into Arabic (Research Question 4).

Finally, I consider the experiments which, examine the Arabic subtitles of English-language audiovisuals and suggest some ideas to deal with the above mentioned difficulties. I also aim at testing the validity of the functional approach suggested, and detailed in chapter two, and directed by Research Question 1.

Discussion in this chapter is based on three experiments on the three audiovisuals chosen in the previous chapter as the case studies. The experiments are also supported by data from the interviews conducted with professionals and the participants in the experiments.

#### **4.1 Introduction**

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The first issue that this chapter deals with is the subtitling of dialect in English-language audiovisuals into Arabic through trying to answer the first thesis question related to this issue. As we saw in chapter two, one of the major obstacles that

subtitlers face is related to subtitling language varieties. The language we speak tells who we are. As Trudgill (1983: 34) argues “*The internal differentiation of human societies is reflected in their languages.*” In other words, language reflects a speaker’s education, region and background. However, such areas of difference, together with the grammatical, morphological and phonetic (let alone the cultural) particularities which are apparent in speech, almost disappear in written discourse. This means that only the dialogue reveals and helps us understand the background of the characters. The British audiences, and to some other extent English-speaking ones, will know the background, the dialect as well as the social class in the film *Trainspotting*, or *This is England*, for example. However, the same films, when subtitled, will not be understood in the same way by the Arabic-speaking audiences since most of these issues disappear in subtitling, especially when they are subtitled into MSA. This creates a problem for the translator as to what extent s/he will be able to reflect colloquial in the standard language. In written texts, it is possible to add “occasional additions which might compensate the important effects produced by a dialect” as is the case in printed translation as noted by Dickins et al (2002: 168). This is not feasible on screen due to space and time limitations.

## **4.2 Case Study (A): *Educating Rita***

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### **4.2.1 Introduction**

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Newmark (1995c: 145) argues that the more colloquial or idiomatic a source language text, the more it is likely to diverge from literal translation in the target language. But since this is not the case in subtitling dialects of English audiovisuals into MSA, it was necessary to know how this may affect the message of the subtitled material. But before we proceed, it will be useful to have an idea about what practitioners think in this regard.

Kaadi, from the Tanweer subtitling and dubbing company in Damascus (see Appendix D), believes that sometimes it is possible to subtitle English dialects into Arabic. But even if they cannot really be translated, he claims, this does not affect the message. Kaadi did not indicate how dialects are subtitled into Arabic nor how they do not tend to affect the message if they are not subtitled. It is possible that he

wanted to give his company a good reputation by stating that they are able to deliver the message to the target audience whatever it is. Then he argued that in case this cannot be done, this may not affect the message of a film. On the other hand, El-Hakim, from VSI International in London (see Appendix B for more details), had a different opinion in this regard. In fact, she was rather more frank than Kaadi. When she was asked whether any loss is incurred when English dialects are subtitled into MSA, she maintained: “Yes, of course, any translation – not only subtitling – is bound to lose some of the spirit of the work in the process. All endeavours to ‘compensate’ this loss aim at conveying the spirit or the core message as closely as possible in the localized version.” Although she did not mention how, she at least admitted the difficulty of the task. Moreover, Khuddro, from Silver Screen Subtitling in London (see Appendix A), argued that it is important to render English dialects into Arabic ones, even though it is unlikely that the message would be affected if they are not. Similarly, according to Baradhi from Gulf Film in Dubai (see Appendix C), even if dialects cannot be rendered, the message of the film will not be affected whatsoever since the audience will eventually understand without any need to make it explicit. Again, Khuddro and Baradhi believe that the audience will get the message through what they see on screen such as, for example, the way actors dress, the way they behave, etc. Finally, Hayek, from Pro Subtitling in Beirut, (see Appendix E) believed that regardless of whether the message is affected or not, it is not possible to render these dialects into Arabic.

In order to observe how English-language dialects are translated into Arabic and to what extent is Arabic able to reflect such dialects, an example from one of the English films will be given before we move to talk in details about the case study chosen for this part of the chapter. *Nil by Mouth* (Oldman, 1997) is a British film surrounding the life of a family of characters living on a council estate in working-class South-East London, where the director grew up, and depicting the poverty, violence and misery of these characters’ lives that have not lived up to expectations. But what makes the film, which was a critical success winning eight awards, unique is the language variety spoken in it. Cockney is a famous English dialect spoken in East and North London by the working class people who now regard themselves as the 'real' Londoners in a very cosmopolitan city where a lot of the population have come in from other areas of the country or abroad.

Some characteristics of Cockney, as stated in Hughes et al (2005: 73-6), are:

1) /h/ is almost invariably absent; 2) the glottal stop (ʔ) is extremely common; 3) the contrast between /θ/ and /f/ as well as between /ð/ and /v/ is variably lost; /ei/ is realized as /æɪ/, /ai/ as /ɒɪ/, and /ou/ as (æu); 4) when they are initial, /p, t, k/ are heavily aspirated more so than in RP.

Moreover, as well as having a distinctive pronunciation and many grammatical features, the language of London is most notable for its Rhyming Slang. This consists of using a phrase that rhymes, with the word you want to say, so 'telephone' becomes 'dog and bone'. Unfortunately, many of the phrases then lose the second word, making it very hard for the outsider to guess the original meaning; 'rabbit' for 'talk' comes from the phrase 'rabbit and pork', but few would be able to guess it. A lot of the original rhyming slang appeared among the market traders in the East End of London in the 19th century, but it is still used and new words and phrases are being invented all the time. At the moment, it is very fashionable to use famous people's names, so the DJ Pete Tong is used meaning 'wrong'- 'things have gone Pete Tong'.

Cockney has been known as being spoken by people the lower class in the London area. For instance, Mathews (1938: ix) argued that "Of all the non-standard forms of English, Cockney is the most generally despised and downtrodden". This brings to mind what a woman who worked with Fritze (1982: 6) said to him: "Because I speak Cockney, they all think I'm stupid". Who are 'they'? –"everyone who ascribes to the bourgeois cultural values, including so-called proper spoken English". The term, however, is now used happily and proudly by the people of the East and North of London, who, as noted, regard themselves as the 'real' Londoners in a very cosmopolitan city where a lot of the population have come in from other areas of the country or abroad.

In the following part of a dialogue that goes on between Mark and Ray in Nil by Mouth, the characteristics of Cockney clearly appear in almost every sentence. The Arabic subtitles are also written for reasons of comparison between the two texts. The scene takes place in Ray's flat:

- 1-       **Mark:** So, we're sitting there,
- 2-       and I'm taking these pills, right?

مارك: كنا جالسين هناك  
وكنتم أتناول تلك الحبوب، حسناً؟

- 1- **Mark:** We were sitting there,  
2- and I used to take these pills, right?  
  
3- I've got these pills, right? I was diagnosed  
4- of depression, right? This is years ago that.

كنت أعاني من الإكتئاب منذ سنوات  
وتم وصف تلك الحبوب لي.

- 3- I suffered depression for years  
4- So, these pills were prescribed to me.

- 5- And these pills, right,  
6- have got a f\*\*\*ing side effect.

وكان لها تأثيرات جانبية.

- 5- .....  
6- They had side effects.

- 7- No one knows over here, right?  
8- The Americans know, right?

لم يكن أحد من عائلتي يعلم هذا  
رغم أن الأمريكيان كانوا على علم.

- 7- No one of my family knew about that...  
8- Although the American did.

- 9- We're like the f\*\*\*ing guinea pigs.  
10- We're dropping like f\*\*\*ing flies.



كنا نبدو كالخنازير الأليفة.  
كنا نتساقط كالذباب.

9- We looked like guinea pigs.

10- We were dropping like flies.

11- So, all of a sudden, I'm sitting there,

12- and you know what?

وفجأة، وبينما أنا جالسٌ هناك...  
بالمناسبه،

11- Suddenly, and while I was sitting there,

12- by the way,

13- Know what they reckon now?

14- That these pills make you violent.

هل تعلم ماذا يعتقدون الآن؟  
يقولون إن هذه الحبوب تجعلك عدواني.

13- Do you know what they think now?

14- They say that these pills make you violent.

15- **Ray:** You? You're not violent.

16- **Mark:** Not proper violent.

راي: أنت؟ أنت لست عدواني.  
مارك: ليس تماماً.

15- **Ray:** You? You're not violent.

16- **Mark:** Not exactly.

- 17- No, like weird s\*\*\*,  
18- like killing your mother.

ليس إلى درجة مخيفه  
كقتل أمك.

- 17- Not to a scary extent...  
18- like killing your mother.

- 19- **Ray:** Wanna kill my mother-in-law for me?  
20- **Mark:** Yeah, f\*\*\*ing she needs it.

راي: هل تود قتل حماتي؟  
مارك: نعم، انها تستحق.

- 19- **Ray:** Do you want to kill my mother-in-law?  
20- **Mark:** Yes, she deserves.

- 21- And guess what they called them.  
22- Everyone called them the "happy pill."

احزر ماذا يسمون هذه الحبوب.  
الجميع يدعونها بـ "حبوب السعادة"

- 21- Guess what they call these pills?  
22- Everyone calls them the "happy pills".

- 23- I mean, that's a f\*\*\*ing joke.  
24- Happy pill? They was like c\*\*\*s.

هذا الاسم مثير للسخرية: "حبوب السعادة".  
إنها قمة في الرداءة.

- 23- This name is funny: "happy pill".

24- They are utterly bad.

25- You couldn't p\*\*\*, you couldn't s\*\*\* you couldn't come.

26- F\*\*\*ing happy pill?

فمن يتناولها لا يستطيع التبول و التغوط.  
يالها من حبوب سعادته!

25- Whoever takes them will not be able to urinate or defecate.

26- What a happy pill!

.....

In the dialogue above, the characteristics of Cockney are apparent. For instance, regarding pronunciation, the word 'happy' is pronounced as 'æbi', 'couldn't' is pronounced as 'kəʔnt' and so on. Moreover, in line 4, 'that' is also left out in translation. Likewise, the word 'right' occurred seven times and was translated only once. As far as grammar is concerned, in line 24 Mark says "They was" but this is not reflected in the translation, either. Another factor that distinguishes this language variety from RP is swearing which occurs almost in every sentence in the source text but almost disappears in the target text where omission and euphemism are used.

This is an example of how a dialect is dealt by translators. There is no doubt that the characteristics of Cockney are lost in the target language where there seems no effort for compensation. The same applies to the American film *Good Will Hunting* (Sant, 1997) in which the working and middle class dialects of Boston appear clearly just as they do in *Educating Rita*, our first case study into which we now turn.

*Educating Rita* (Gilbert, 1983) is a play written by Willy Russell and turned into a film directed by Lewis Gilbert and starring Michael Caine and Julie Walters. It is a story of a hairdresser with a sharp wit, who is married to Denny and at 26 does not want a baby. She wants to discover herself so she joins the Open University where she meets Dr, Frank Bryant who also needed a challenge. In this atmosphere, the film tells the story of a teacher and a student who discover themselves through each other.

#### 4.2.2 *Educating Rita*: Social background

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The Liverpool of that time, 1983, was a centre of severe economic depression and urban decay with the highest levels of unemployment in the developed world with an average 25% of the workforce out of work in which strikes played a major role. See Taaffe and Mulheam (1988) and Simey (1996) for more on strikes as well as the working class in Liverpool. This is in contrast to previous years when Liverpool was one of the wealthiest cities due to the enormous trade through its large port and then during the 1960's being branded 'the coolest place' due to the great development of music through great groups such as the Beatles and Gerry and the Pacemakers.

Rita is a fine example of a working class citizen of the 1980's who came from a city full of unemployment. We see her looking for choice and wanting to be educated in order to gain a better quality of life by working hard. See Davies (1996) for more details on politics and social unrest in Liverpool.

Liverpool in the eighties was also a place in which there were many artists. They were able to express themselves and the arts thrived. Willy Russell is an example of this and through his writing, he shows his own views. This is a humorous work which explores the many issues relating to choice, relationships, class and education. The play is written to highlight the difference in class between an upper-class lecturer, and a working-class student. It shows how Rita changes her class, but perhaps also loses some of her values as a result.

#### 4.2.3 *Dialects in the film*

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Altano (1988: 152) argues that dialects are used to enable the scope of characterization. To highlight class difference, Russell adopts both the Liverpudlian accent represented by Rita and her husband and the London accent represented by Dr. Frank and his friends. According to Hughes and Trudgill (1996: 92-6), the Liverpool accent, also known as Scouse, is the accent particular to the northern English port of Liverpool and the adjoining urban areas of Lancashire and the Wirral region of Cheshire. The Liverpool accent is highly distinctive, and wholly different to the accents used in neighbouring regions of Lancashire and Cheshire. Lancashire is believed by many to have the most diverse selection of accents of any English

county or district. This is considered to be due to the large amount of immigration into the Liverpool area from Ireland, Wales, Scotland, the rest of northern England and even the Caribbean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some characteristic features of the Liverpool accent (see Hughes and Trudgill, 1996: 92-4 for more details on this) include:

- A fast, highly inflected manner of speech, with a range of rising and falling tones untypical of most of northern England.
- The final letters of many words are often lost: “get” becomes “gerr”, “all” (ɔ:l) becomes “orr” (ɔ:r).
- “th” (ð) is often pronounced as “d”, for example “there” (ðɜ:) becomes “dere” (dɜ:) as in the phrase “oarite dere la!” (“all right there, lad!”).
- The distinctive fricative “ck” sound from the Welsh influence, as in the phrase: “gerr off me backk will yer!” (ger ɒf mi bækx)
- /h/ is usually absent, but is sometimes present: “him”: (im).
- Unlike in other northern urban accents (but in common with Newcastle), the final vowel of words like *city* and *seedy* is /i:/.

Liverpudlians are blessed with a great sense of wit and humour. Furthermore, this accent is popular as the soft regional accent is seen as friendly and helpful in building relationships. There are many reasons why people like or dislike the Liverpool accent. These could be linguistic in that they do not like the high pitch or the tone and find it hard to understand.

Rita comes from the Liverpool working class. She talks with a heavy Scouse accent and continuously uses colloquial speech. An example of this could be: “D’ y’ get a lot like me?” or “That’s f\*\*\*ing rubbish”. At one point, Rita changes her voice totally. She abandons her accent and adopts more formal speech. At this point the audience sees another side of her character’s disposition. Rita adopts an imitation of RP. Frank notices and tells her that it is unnecessary to abandon her uniqueness to be a “proper student”:

**RITA:** “I know, Frank. I’m terribly sorry. It was unavoidable.”

**FRANK:** “Was it really? What’s wrong with your voice?”

**RITA:** “Nothing is wrong with it, Frank. I have merely decided to talk properly. As Trish says, there is not a lot of point in discussing beautiful literature in an ugly voice.”

However, even though Rita is now (at the end of the film) totally educated, she has changed yet again. She is no longer using her posh voice, she has gone back to using slang, and has started smoking again. Rita realised that she could never totally fit in with the middle class, and she is who she wants to be. For example: “Look at those tits.”, “Haven’t y’ read it yet?”, “D’y’ wanna lend it?” These quotes highlight Rita’s inability, or unwillingness, to use Standard English. This reminds us of the sentence Frank said to Rita towards the end of the film commenting on the change she wanted in herself: “You didn’t sing a better song but you sang a different song”. Therefore, he wanted her to understand that the best anyone can be is him or herself and since Trish tried to kill herself, Rita came to the conclusion that no one’s life is perfect. She has now dropped Trish’s accent and has returned to being the old Rita at the end of the film.

#### 4.2.4 Subtitling *Educating Rita* into Arabic

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Subtitling the film into MSA would not reflect the dialects and the change that takes place in Rita when she becomes educated and when she tries to imitate the middle class. This leads us to say that the difference in class which is so clear through the accent and through the vocabulary that Rita uses disappears when the film is subtitled into Arabic. As was mentioned before, many words (such as mate, lass, lad, etc.) do not give the same effect when spoken in the native accent when they are translated into Arabic. It is this which complicates the task for the translator. And as Newmark (1995b: 77) suggests, the widest syntactic differences between languages are often in colloquial language. They make translation difficult.

The film was subtitled into MSA in 1986 and the translation seems to be a good one. However, the accent, the social class differences and the change that occurs in Rita, part of which appears in her language, disappear in the Arabic subtitles. In the following passages from a dialogue taken from the beginning of the

film, we will try to find how the translator dealt with the differences between Rita's and Bryan's registers. The scene starts with Rita going to the Open University for her first appointment with Bryan in his office. The dialogue, which we quote at length (four pages) due to its importance, begins at minute 0.05.00 and ends at minute 0.12.30. Each Arabic translation will be followed by a back translation into English:

(Rita knocks on door)

**Bryan:** Er, come in.

ادخل

**Bryan:** Come in.

Come in!

ادخل

Come in.

For God's sake, come in!

بالله عليك ادخل

For God's sake, come in.

**Rita:** I'm comin' in, aren't I? You wanna get  
that bleedin' handle fixed.

كنت أحاول الدخول

عليك أن تصلح قبضة الباب

**Rita:** I was trying to come in.

You have to fix the door's handle.

**Bryan:** Er, yes, yes, I meant to.

كنت أنوي فعل هذا

**Bryan:** I intended to do so.

**Rita:** No good meaning to,  
you wanna get on with it.

النية لا تكفي

عليك أن تسعى لفعل ذلك

**Rita:** Intention is not enough.

You have to do it.

One day you'll be shouting, "Come in,"

and it'll go on forever

يوماً ما ستقضي عمرك و أنت تصرخ

أدخل

One day you'll spend your life shouting

come in!

cos the poor sod won't be able to get in

and you won't be able to get out.

لأن الشخص لن يتمكن من فتح الباب ليدخل

وأنت لن تستطيع الخروج

Because the person will not be able to open the door to come in

and you will not be able to go out.

**Bryan:** What is your name?

**Rita:** Me first name?

ما هو اسمك؟

اسمي الأول؟

**Bryan:** What is your name?

**Rita:** My first name?

**Bryan:** Well, that would constitute

some sort of start.

لا بأس، سيكون هذا بداية جيدة

**Bryan:** Well, that would be a good start.

**Rita:** Rita.

ريتا

Rita

**Bryan:** Rita. Ah.



Here we are.

ريتا

لنرَ

**Bryan:** Rita!

Let us see...

Rita? It says here Mrs S White.

لكن هنا مكتوب السيدة (سين) وايت

But here it says Mrs. S. White.

**Rita:** Oh, yes, that's S for Susan.

That's just me real name.

صحيح. هذا اختصار سوزان

هذا اسمي الحقيقي

**Rita:** True. That's S for Susan.

This is my real name.

But I'm not a Susan any more,

I've changed me name to Rita.

You know, after Rita Mae Brown?

لكنني حولته الى ريتا

تشبهاً بريتا ماي براون

But I changed it to Rita.

After Rita Mae Brown.

**Bryan:** Who.

من؟

**Bryan:** Who?

**Rita:** Rita Mae Brown

who wrote Rubyfruit Jungle.

Haven't you read it?

مؤلفة رواية أدغال الياقوت

ألم تقرأ هذه الرواية من قبل؟

**Rita:** The writer of Rubyfruit Jubgle.  
Haven't you read it before?

It's a fantastic book, you know.

Do you wanna lend it?

انها رواية عظيمة

هل تريد استعارتها؟

It is a great novel.

Do you want to borrow it?

**Bryan:** Yes, yes. Well, thank you very much.

OK.

لا بأس.

شكراً لك.

**Bryan:** All right.

Thank you.

**Rita:** And what do they call you round here?

**Bryan:** Sir. But you may call me Frank.

بماذا ينادونك هنا؟

سيدي

لكن يمكنك أن تتناديني فرانك

**Rita:** What do they call you here?

Sir.

**Bryan:** But you may call me Frank.

**Rita:** OK. Frank.

حسناً

فرانك

**Rita:** OK.

Frank.

That's a nice picture, isn't it, Frank?

**Bryan:** Er, yes, I suppose it is.

هذه صورة جميلة، أليس كذلك فرانك؟

أفترض هذا

**Rita:** This is a nice picture, isn't it, Frank?

**Bryan:** I suppose so.

**Rita:** It's very erotic.

انها مثيرة للشهوة

**Rita:** It is erotic.

**Bryan:** I don't think I've looked at that picture  
in ten years.

But yes, it is, I suppose so.

لم أنظر الى هذه الصورة منذ عشر سنوات  
و لكنني أظن أنني أوافقك الرأي

**Bryan:** I have not looked into that picture for ten years  
But I suppose that I agree with you.

**Rita:** There's no suppose about it,  
look at those tits.

عليك أن تكون متأكداً

أنظر الى هذين النهدين

**Rita:** You should be sure.  
Look at those breasts.

Do you mind me using words like that?

**Bryan:** Like what?

- أمل ألا تمنع إذا استخدمت مثل هذه الألفاظ  
- أي ألفاظ

**Rita:** I hope that you do not mind me using such words.

**Bryan:** Which words?

**Rita:** Tits.

**Bryan:** No.

- نهدين

- لا

**Rita:** Breasts.

**Bryan:** No.

**Rita:** You know, like, when I'm  
in the hairdresser's, where I work,  
مثلاً، عندما أكون في صالون الحلاقة  
حيث أعمل

**Rita:** For example, when I am in the hairdresser's  
Where I work

I'll say something like,  
"I'm really f\*\*\*ed," dead loud  
أتلطف بقول  
تبا، أنا حقاً منهكة' بصوت عال'  
I will say something like  
"Damn, I'm really tired" in a loud voice.

and it doesn't half cause a fuss.  
و لا يكثر أحد لما أقول  
and no one cares about what I say.

.....

**Rita:** What's this like?

**Bryan:** Howards End.

- ما هذا؟

- نهاية هاورد

**Rita:** What's this?

**Bryan:** Howards End.

**Rita:** Howards End! Sounds filthy, doesn't it?

EM Foster.

يبدو هذا شنيعاً

فoster

**Rita:** That sounds filthy.

Foster.

**Bryan:** Forster.

**Rita:** Oh, yeah.

What's it like?

- فورستر

- ما هي قصته؟

**Bryan:** Forster.

**Rita:** What's its story?

**Bryan:** Read it. Would you like to borrow it?

اقرأيها بنفسك

هل تودين استعارته؟

**Bryan:** Read it yourself.

Do you want to borrow it?

**Rita:** Yeah, all right. I'll look after it for you.

حسنًا، سأعتني به

**Rita:** Well, I'll look after it.

.....

The seven and half minute dialogue introduces the two characters' backgrounds and dialects through their way of speaking. But a close look at the Arabic translation shows that there is hardly any difference between both characters in this regard since the swear words are euphemized and ST vernacular expressions are translated into standard Arabic. For example, 'me name' is translated as 'اسمي' or 'my name'. The same applies to 'meself'. Moreover, swear words such as 'bleeding' and 'bloody' are omitted in the translation and the phrase 'f\*\*\*ed up' is euphemized as 'تبا' or 'may evil befall on someone'. Furthermore, although the translator's choice for 'tits' 'نهدين' (breasts) cannot be said to be euphemised, the word in Arabic is formal and the English is vernacular.

Moreover, when Rita offers to lend 'Rubyfruit Jungle' to Bryan she says: 'Do you wanna lend it?', whereas when he offers to lend her 'Howards End' he says: 'Would you like to borrow it?' The difference in register appears clearly between the two utterances in English. While in Arabic, the first is translated as 'هل تريد استعارتها؟'

‘Do you want to borrow it?’ and the second is translated as ‘هل تودين استعارته؟’ ‘Would you like to borrow it?’ As both ‘lend’ and ‘borrow’ are used for the same purpose or to ask the same question, although they have different meanings, they appear to be the same in Arabic and the audience would not spot any difference.

Other examples that took place during the same dialogue also support the argument. For instance, Rita uses ‘like’ at the end of a sentence every now and then, as is the habit of working class people. This word is omitted in the Arabic translation: ‘What’s this like?’ is translated as ‘ما هذا؟’ or ‘What’s this?’

In the following section, the aim is to find out if this translation helped the audience understand the dialect versus social class dilemma by conducting an experiment.

#### 4.2.5 Experiment (I): *Educating Rita*

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##### 4.2.5.1 Introduction

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Since the idea of subtitling English-language dialects into Arabic dialects was ruled out due to the fact that colloquial was not meant to be used in writing because, as Mazid (2006: 94) argues, they still lack the codification and orthographic systematicity necessary for being used in writing (except in the case of using some lexical item occasionally), and since the ability of dubbing to represent the dialects of the source film will be discussed in the next chapter, there remains little to suggest with regard to subtitling dialects. However, in order to minimize the gap between two cultures when subtitling a film such as *Educating Rita* into Arabic, one may use a simple, yet crucial technique. When we watch films, we sometimes notice that they start with an introduction that aims at delivering information to the audience that is important for the understanding of the film. Similarly, this technique can be used to draw the attention of the spectators to the issue of social class and dialects. This introduction, however, should not be a summary of the film but rather a clue that highlights the issue of dialects. For example, a possible introduction to *Educating Rita* could be the following:

تقع أحداث هذا الفيلم في المدينة الصناعية الإنكليزية (ليفربول) حيث يعيش الكثير من أفراد الطبقة العاملة الذين يتميزون بلهجتهم التي تختلف عن اللهجة السائدة في الطبقة الوسطى. تسعى (ريتا) للحصول على حياة أفضل من خلال مجاراتها للطبقة الوسطى فهل هناك ثمنٌ لهذه المجازاة؟

**The events of this film take place in the English industrial city Liverpool, where many ordinary people live and who speak in an accent different from that spoken by the middle class.**

**Rita tries to live a life similar to that of the middle class. But is there a price to be paid for this?**

As one can see, such simple introductions may fill the gap that MSA cannot fill. They help compensate for the loss that results from failing to transfer spoken colloquial English into written MSA. In order to see to what extent this method can be valid, an experiment was conducted on this film by adding the above stated introduction.

#### **4.2.5.2 Description of participants and experiments**

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Because it was done in Syria, the participants in this experiment were all Syrians who came from different educational backgrounds as well as different age groups. However, they all shared one thing: their English did not go beyond the intermediate level. For the experiment, they were told that they were going to watch the same film, *Educating Rita*, twice and were requested to choose the translation that helped them understand the message of the film better. On the first occasion, participants were requested to watch the film without the introduction suggested above; the second time they were requested to watch the introduction. Afterwards, a short interview was conducted to listen to their points of view and find out which translation they preferred and why as we will see.

#### **4.2.5.3 Results**

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When Sami, 23 years old, was asked which of the two translations had helped him understand the story or the message which the film wanted to convey, he replied that he had noticed no difference, and that the introduction in the second copy had not

added much to his understanding of the film. He said that he knew already that Rita was a poor girl who was trying to have a better life by having a better future through going to the University. Similarly, Adel, 35 years old, indicated that he noticed the issue of class difference by noting the difference between Rita's and Frank's social surroundings, especially where they both lived and worked. So, the introduction did not matter a lot. But when both Sami and Adel were asked if they noticed any differences in the dialects or even accents in the film, they said that they had not.

The rest of the participants have different point of view as we will see in the following few examples. Omar, 28 years old, maintained that the introduction enabled him to pay attention to the differences in the accents which passed unnoticed in the first copy. Similarly, Zahir, 41 years old, argued that the introduction in the second copy made all the difference for him because it increased his understanding of the film. Moreover, Murad, 25 years old, insisted that the second copy raised his awareness of an issue that he had not realized in the first copy. He said that without the introduction he would not have known about the relationships between class and dialects for they do not exist in Syria. The rest of the participants shared similar opinions to this, too.

#### 4.2.5.4 Conclusion

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As was reported in the literature, section 2.3.1, and as Fawcett (1996), Karamitroglou, (1997), Jaskanen, (2001), and Assis Rosa, (2001) have maintained, subtitling dialects into dialects does not solve the issue of rendering such dialects comprehensible because they will be difficult to read. It is like creating a barrier while trying to find a solution to another barrier. Therefore, the solution above tried to find a middle ground in which the ST dialects are introduced to the target audience at no cost. Although El-Hakim (see Appendix B) from VSI did not agree with such a solution because it sounds as if it tells the audience about the message of the film from the very beginning and therefore spoils the suspense element, most of the participants as well as the rest of the practitioners who were interviewed thought that it is practical and helpful since there is no other option, apart from dubbing. Moreover, it should be remembered that there are many films that adopt this technique to make the audience familiar with a certain aspect that a film cannot tell for different reasons. For example, in the famous Spanish film *Pan's Labyrinth* (del



Toro, 2006) which was released in 2006, there is an introduction at the beginning that sets the historical background of the film, mentioning the war between the Spanish Maquis, guerrillas, who fought against the Franco regime in the region as well as the place and time in which the story took place. The same can be applied to *Valkyrie* (Singer, 2008) and other films.

Moreover, the fact that the majority of the participants voted for the idea of introducing dialects shows that the first showing without the introduction did not help them to understand Scouse and what it implies and that introducing the dialects in the second showing did improve their understanding of the film. This means that the issue of transferring dialects in films such as *Educating Rita* should not be ignored. Although the technique suggested above is costless and does not take time, it is only an attempt to bridge the gap between the ST and the target culture. Professionals may also propose other methods that do the same job in a better way.

## 4.3 Swearing and taboo

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### 4.3.1 Introduction

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Swearing is the second issue in subtitling into Arabic that this thesis tackles in order to answer the second thesis question about censorship and its effect on the message of a film.

Swearing and culture are in fact interrelated. While swearing is more acceptable in Western culture, it is less so in many other cultures such as the Arab and Islamic ones. For example, Pakistani cricket umpire Shakoor Rana was quoted in Hughes (1991: 32) as saying: "Calling me a bastard may be excusable in England, but here people murder someone who calls another man a bastard." In many English-language audiovisuals of different genres swearing is an essential component. Turner (1999: 139) argues that film is a social practice that reflects everyday lives through gossip, fashion, and the whole range of activities through which cultural identities are formed. Moreover, according to Phillips (1975: 23), the cinema has been forced to diversify from its traditional material. One of its more successful reactions to this has been the injection of greater realism into pictures. In

the case of subtitled audiovisuals, translators, together with the moving picture, share the responsibility of reflecting this realism to the target audience.

Karamitroglou (1996: 56) proposes that film translation in particular has an immense potential to access and bridge peoples' lifestyles and thoughts, more perhaps than any other mode of translation. Furthermore, Leppihalme (1997) and Hatim (1996) suggest that translators need to be not just bilingual but bicultural in order to fully understand the ST and be able to transmit it to the target audience. The challenge begins there, in fact. For example, Nord (1994: 61) believes in the untranslatability of some cultural aspects which Leppihalme calls 'cultural bumps'. These aspects include cultural-specific or culture-bound elements such as the translation of humour, including plays on words or puns, and the translation of strong language or swear words. This is one of the reasons why censorship, according to Hughes (1991: 191), has increasingly been less concerned with ideological or political issues and has focused on the question of 'obscenity', usually taken to mean the explicit depiction of sex and the use of 'dirty' or taboo words. But the debate among translators as well as audiences remains about the extent to which the translator can be faithful to the source text. In other words, how important swear words and taboos are to the understanding of the message of an audiovisual material is what these paragraphs are trying to answer, taking into consideration the fact that people in the West nowadays tend to swear more than in earlier generations. In 2006, a contestant on the UK's *Big Brother* TV show used the f-word 88 times in 20 minutes.

#### 4.3.2 Why swear?

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Montagu (1967: 3) suggests that swearing serves clearly definable social as well as personal purposes. Its function is relief producing when there has already been a sufficient amount of feeling. Moreover, Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 53) argue that swearing can be used to show strong emotions. For them (ibid: 63) swear words are words you use when you have no others better at your disposal. The argument here is that swearing is a personal weakness - your vocabulary is so small that you have to use these 'easy' and 'lazy' words. Fernández Fernández (2006) proposes that people often feel they need to use swear words in order to release tension, to express strong emotions and attitudes, such as anger, surprise, frustration or

annoyance. There are certain situations in which no other words are more appropriate. Jay (2000: 9), moreover, argues that cursing serves the emotional needs of the speaker as well as affecting listeners emotionally. It permits a speaker to express strong emotions and/or produce an emotional impact on the listener.

The famous How Stuff Works webpage explains that many people think of swearing as an instinctive response to something painful and unexpected (like hitting your head on an open cabinet door) or something frustrating and upsetting (like being stuck in traffic on the way to a job interview). This is one of the most common uses for swearing, and many researchers believe that it helps relieve stress and blow off steam, like crying does for small children. Beyond angry or resentful words said in the heat of the moment, swearing is frequently used in social interactions. In the past, researchers have theorized that men swear to create a masculine identity and women swear to be more like men. More recent studies, however, theorize that women swear in part because they are emulating women they admire. Similarly, the use of particular expletives can establish a group identity, membership in a group, express solidarity with other people, express trust and intimacy, add humour, and attempt to camouflage a person's fear or insecurity. People also swear because they feel they are expected to or because swearing has become a habit.

Finally, for Burnham (1993: 210) swearing is a direct assault on social institutions that could conceivably be involved in taboos. Offensive religious and sexual language, therefore, threatens religious and sexual institutions. Moreover, Hughes (1991: 3) argues that swearing draws upon such powerful and incongruous resonators as religion, sex, madness, excretion and nationality, encompassing an extraordinary variety of attitudes, including the violent, the amusing, the shocking, the absurd, the casual and the impossible. But regardless of the reasons why people swear, it is worth remembering that the frequency of use of swear words, especially sexual ones, depends on the social class of the swearer. For instance, McEnery (2006: 55) maintains that the higher the social class the lower the usage of bad language words.

Therefore, the above paragraphs suggest that swearing is necessary for self-relief, and it is a psychological or even a biological need. This leads us to wonder how people in some cultures where swearing is almost absent, at least in public, satisfy or respond to this need, or at least what they do if they do not swear.

### 4.3.3 Euphemism

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Many people think that swear words are not really important for transmitting the message that some audiovisuals try to convey since facial expressions can do the job. This most happens in cultures that do not believe in swearing as a means for expressing anger. One of these means is using words that are close to the taboo ones and which have less effect on the listener. The Chinese, for example, shun swearing. Kao (1994: 172) argues that the Chinese are well-known for their concern for face and that they are good at indirectness of speech, whether with reference to unpleasant realities or out of respect for one's elders and betters. Similarly, the same thing can be said about Arabic-speaking cultures where swear words are hardly spoken on TV.

Having said that does not mean that euphemism is only applied by certain nations or cultures such as the Arab or Chinese ones. In Western culture which is considered more liberal when it comes to swearing and taboos, one can find that some people still euphemise swear and taboo words. For instance, 'shoot' and 'sugar' are euphemisms of 's\*\*\*', 'duck' is a euphemism for 'f\*\*\*' and so on.

Euphemism is the substitution of a less direct word or phrase that people often use to refer to something embarrassing or unpleasant, sometimes to make it seem more acceptable than it really is. Newmark (1995a: 172-3) argues that the purpose of euphemism is to avoid giving offence and/or to conceal the truth. Kao (1994: 174) considers euphemisms as part of idiomatic speech, born of the cultural background, the customs and folkways, the manners and mores of people, and peculiar to a particular time and place. Euphemisms embody synonyms, metaphors, hyperbole, allusions, abbreviations, jargon, slang, puns and other forms of rhetorical language. Moreover, Newmark (2002: 187) proposes that euphemisms reflect linguistically a natural inherent psychological reaction, a type of self-defense. ('I'm not bad' means 'I think I'm good, but I do not want to say so.')

According to Allan and Burridge (1991: 14) euphemism can be achieved through antithetical means, such as by circumlocution and abbreviation, acronym or even complete omission and also by one-to-one substitution; by general-for-specific and part-for-whole substitution. In other words, Allan and Burridge (2006: 2) argue that taboo and the consequent censoring of language motivate language change by promoting the creation of highly inventive and often playful new expressions, or new

meanings for old expressions, causing existing vocabulary to be abandoned. A quick look at any Arabic subtitles on English-language audiovisuals will show that such types of euphemisms are used, sometimes excessively, to hide swear and taboo words. Different swear words are euphemized differently by translators depending on their experience and the demands of the market. As we will see, there is no rule or a pool of vocabulary that is agreed on by subtitlers for substituting the source texts' swear words. Using Standard Arabic, subtitlers find it easy to employ vocabulary which is acceptable to the audience and which expresses, as much as it can, the situation in which swear words are uttered. According to Mazid (2006: 94), using Standard Arabic to replace obscene words in their colloquial version tends to take away most of their obscenity. Words or phrases that are related to religion and sex are considered as taboos in many societies, especially in Muslim ones. And as Andersson and Trudgill (1990: 55) argue, taboos of different sorts are not just isolated facts in a culture but important elements in the structure and social life of a culture.

#### 4.3.4 Case Study (B): *London to Brighton*

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Censorship in the Arab world is not total in the age of globalization and the spread of satellite and pre-paid TV cards. However, and in order to avoid being banned and to satisfy their audience, satellite TV channels that broadcast from outside Arab countries apply censorship to taboos. For those channels or cinemas that operate from within these countries, censorship is usually controlled by a special office that works under the ministry of information, which ensures that all political, religious and sexual taboos are either omitted or euphemized. If a film, for example, does not achieve this, it is then returned to the cinema or TV channel which in turn returns it to the subtitling company to be amended. So, these companies are usually directed by the client (TV channels, cinemas or distributors) about what to censor. But the question here is how do these companies deal with the dilemma of censoring taboos in a way that does not distort the message of the source audiovisual material?

Before we detail the translation of swear words into Arabic in *London to Brighton* (Williams, 2006), we will stop at another famous film that was subtitled in Egypt to see how Egyptian translators dealt with swear words. *Con Air* (West, 1997) is a Hollywood action film directed by Simon West and starring Nicolas Cage.

In the film, there are 143 swear words, 33 of which were omitted in the subtitled version, while the rest were euphemized except in the case of 'p\*\*\*' word which was translated as يتبول or 'to pass urine' and 'hell' was translated as it is: جحيم. The subtitler chose words such as لعين، اللعنة، وغد، حقير، تباً، أحمق or 'damn' 'damned' 'wretched' 'fool' 'vile' and 'may evil befall on someone' to replace words such as 'f\*\*\*' and 's\*\*\*' words and their derivatives, 'punk', 'p\*\*\*\*', 'd\*\*\*head', 'b\*\*\*\*', bastard and so on. (see Appendix G for more details on how all swear words in the film were subtitled and how many of them were omitted) The religious taboos were euphemized in a strange way. For example, 'Jesus!' was subtitled as تباً or 'may evil befall on you'. The sentence about the existence of God which says: "All I can think about is like...there ain't no God; that He don't exist." was translated as: "All I can think about is that God exists but He does not show." or كل ما أفكر به الآن هو أن الله موجود لكنه لا يظهر. This is an example of how taboos are translated in a Hollywood film that was subtitled in Egypt. In Syria, censorship goes even further, as we will see in *London to Brighton*.

*London to Brighton* is a film that was directed by Paul Andrew Williams in 2006 and which was rated 18 since it contains strong language and violence. It is an abrasive thriller about a prostitute (Kelly) and a young runaway (Joanne) escaping the grasp of a ruthless pimp and his shady underworld connections. Set within a flashback structure where events are gradually pieced together, the film is filled with one impossibly tense scene after another, heightened by the fact that you genuinely cannot predict how characters will react to particular situations. The strong language in the film reflects realism. The film paints a vividly realistic underground Britain peopled by prostitutes, pimps, paedophiles and runaways. Despite that, it is believed that the biggest detriment to the film is the language. While it is perfectly acceptable to have characters who swear blindly throughout, especially if it is representative of the world they inhabit, uttering the F word every other word cheapens the drama by making it come across as a crude wannabe rather than a serious contender, which it most certainly is, or rather should have been.

*London to Brighton* was subtitled in Syria in 2006 and, surprisingly enough, the subtitler decided to omit two-thirds of the swear words. For instance, he euphemized the 'f' word 28 times out of 129 and omitted the rest. 'C\*\*\*' was euphemized 9 out of 11 times and was omitted twice. 'S\*\*\*' was euphemized 6 out of 6 times. 'P\*\*\*' was also euphemized 3 out of 3 times and the words 'bastard' and

's\*\*\*hole' were mentioned once each and were euphemized. The words 'a\*\*', 'arse', 'b\*\*\*\*', and 'a\*\*hole' were mentioned once each in the ST and were omitted. The word 'bloody' occurred twice and was also deleted in both. Similar to *Con Air*, the equivalents of the English swear words in Arabic ranged from اللعنة، تباً لعين، جحيم، أحمق، جداً ابتعد to عاهرة، حقير، ضائع or 'damn', 'may evil befall on you', 'damned', 'hell', 'fool', 'prostitute', 'vile', 'slept with' and 'come on', 'very', 'go away'. They were used to replace words such as 'f\*\*\*' and its derivatives, 'bastard', 'b\*\*\*\*', 's\*\*\*', 'c\*\*\*', 'p\*\*\*' and 'a\*\*\*'. For more on the translation of swear words in the film, see Appendix H.

Omitting or euphemizing swear words is a requirement of the audience regardless of whether this may affect the message of the audiovisual material or not. Moreover, there are swear words that do not have equivalents in Arabic linguistically speaking, such as 'f\*\*\*ing' when it occurs as an adjective. For example, 'f\*\*\*ing' in 'I'm f\*\*\*ing angry' is usually treated in Arabic as a dummy adjective or is translated into an adverb such as 'very' or جداً. Another alternative is to replace it by an adverb such as 'extremely' or للغاية, for instance. But regardless of whether omitting swear words and taboos is done for ideological or linguistic reasons, Baradhi (see Appendix C) maintains that omitting or euphemizing swear words does not affect the message of the film but rather tones down the rhythm of these words. Hayek (see Appendix E) argues that this does not affect the message of a film, especially if swear words are not essential to that message. Similarly, Khuddro (see Appendix A) proposes that the message is usually not affected by euphemism. Moreover, Kaadi (see Appendix D) maintains that the message is unlikely to be affected, although this may depend on the film. But El-Hakim (see Appendix B) had a different opinion. She believes that euphemism does affect the message of film since it is impossible to maintain the same effect as the original and thus some content may be lost. In order to find out more about censorship of English swear words in films that are subtitled into Arabic and whether this affects the message or not, an experiment on *London to Brighton* was conducted as will be illustrated in the next section.

### 4.3.5 Experiment (II): *London to Brighton*

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#### 4.3.5.1 Introduction

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Considering the number of swear words omitted, it is obvious that the subtitler of *London to Brighton* decided to reduce obscenity as much as he could, thus he kept 47 words out of 154. In order to see whether this affected the plot and its intended message, an experiment on the film was conducted in order to try to keep as many swear words as possible, adopting skopos theory as a guideline to translate the film. Although the film contains strong language that continues throughout, swear words could still be rendered and make the film watchable in the target culture. Therefore, the skopos (purpose or goal) in this case was to translate the strong language in a way that would not offend the target audience and yet retained its function. This meant euphemising and deleting swear words as one cannot talk about equivalence in this regard. As a result, 99 swear words out of the 107 omitted were translated and added to the 47 that had already been subtitled. Furthermore, other swear words that were not used by the subtitler were also introduced to avoid as much repetition as possible as Appendix H illustrates. Only 8 swear words were ruled out in the modified version. Moreover, some of the already euphemized words were toned up as much as possible to sound more realistic but remain inoffensive. For example, the 'f' word which was translated as 'very' in 'I'm f\*\*\*ing angry' which became 'I'm very angry' was re-translated as 'للعنة، أنا مستاء جداً' 'Damn, I'm very angry', and so on.

#### 4.3.5.2 Description of participants and experiment

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Ten participants from different nationalities (mainly Syrian, Jordanian, Libyan, Palestinian, and Saudis), different educational levels and age groups were chosen. The experiment was done in the UK where the participants had come to either start a language course or to visit relatives. For validity purposes, only participants who usually rely on subtitles to understand audiovisuals were selected. In other words, their command of English was checked to ensure it did not exceed upper intermediate. The participants were asked to watch translations of *London to Brighton*, the original one as well as that which was modified. After they had watched



both copies, starting with the original translation and ending with the modified one, the participants were asked which of the two translations better reflected the plot of the film, and as a result, allowed them to enjoy the film more.

#### **4.3.5.3 Results and discussion**

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Although the ten participants were expected to find the new modified translation more reflective of the film's accelerating events, this was not the case. When it comes to swearing and taboo, the Arabic-speaking audiences are not tolerant, even if such words are euphemised. Euphemism is relative in the sense that what has been euphemised, may still be considered too rude by others. For example, some may not accept the 'f' word (verb) being translated as 'to sleep with' or 'يَنَامُ مع' but prefer it to be translated as 'to have intimacy with' or 'يُعَاشِرُ', and so on. It was surprising that some of the participants preferred the first translation simply because it was censored more than the modified one and it was easy to read as the subtitles were shorter. This is what happened with Abdulaziz (aged 30) from Egypt, Fuaad (27) from Jordan and Muhammed (36) from Saudi Arabia who preferred the first translation for the reasons mentioned above, despite the fact that the modified version still euphemised swear words to respect the audience's sensitivities. They in fact remind us of one of the BBC viewers, Mr S J Redfern, who wrote to the Radio Times in 1988 saying: "Could I for one congratulate the BBC for removing offensive language which neither enhances the quality of the film nor diminishes its powerful effect" (cited in: Andersson and Trudgill, 1990: 14).

The seven other participants opted for the modified translation since it went hand in hand with the plot and action of the film. The first, they argued, did not reflect the characters' attitudes. In other words, when the events reach a fiery climax it is noticeable that the translation does not go hand in hand with them. For instance, Mostafa (20) maintained that he interacted with the second version more as it was more realistic and expressive than the first. Similarly, Ibrahim (23) also found the second film more interesting than the first because the subtitles synchronized with the utterances, whereas the first translation ruled out some words. Finally, Amir from Syria (29) maintained that the second translation helped him enjoy the film more because the swear words reflected the rapid action in the film. The first translation, according to Amir, felt cold in comparison to what went on screen.

#### 4.3.5.4 Conclusion

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The issue of translating taboos is problematic simply because different people have different backgrounds and, therefore, their perception of swear words, even when euphemized, varies. An example of this is the 3 participants who preferred a more conservative translation, although the modified translation took into account the reaction of the audience. Nevertheless, the number of swear words that occurred in the film seemed too great for some of the participants. However, the fact that 7 participants out of 10 were in favour of the second version proves that censorship, when excessively done, can debase the intended message of the audiovisuals, especially where swearing is part of the message. For this reason, the goal(s) of the translation should be defined so that the translator knows what the message is that the audiovisual material's distributor wants to deliver and how it should be delivered.

Another thing that should be learned from this experiment is that in order to win over the three participants who voted for the first translation, the swear words chosen to be toned up should be toned down again, especially those related to sex such as the 'f' words, the 'c' word, 'prostitute', etc. The danger does not in fact lie in the number of swear words but in the way they are rendered into Arabic. After all, it is audiences who give the final word for a success or a failure of a translation and, therefore, it is they whom the translator should bear in mind in the first place when translating.

To conclude, as was mentioned in section 2.3.2, Arab (Athamneh and Zitawi, 1999; Khuddro, 2000; Mazid, 2006), Asian (Chen, 2004) and Western (Krasovska, 2004; Scandura, 2004; Fernández Dobao, 2006; Taivalkoski-Shilov, 2008) cultures euphemise and censor swearing and taboo words sometimes, although the degree of such euphemism and censorship varies from one culture to another. The question is how many words to censor and euphemise rather than whether to apply censorship or not, something which is unquestionable, indeed. So, it is the amount of swearing that should be euphemised to which attention should be paid, especially if swear words are part and parcel of the audiovisuals' message.

## 4.4 Humour

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### 4.4.1 Introduction

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This section of the thesis will deal with the third translation obstacle in subtitling into Arabic which is the subtitling of humour. It will examine what effect subtitled humour may have on the target audience compared to that which the original text had on its audience (Research question 4).

But before we proceed to define humour, it is worth attracting the attention of the reader to what Diaz-Cintas and Remael propose (2007: 212). They argue that defining humour is a tricky undertaking; that definitions of humour and approaches to its study have accumulated over time, and that they continue to do so. Humour is defined by Newmark (2003: 126) as “a generic term for mirth, laughter and smiling. It has elements of the surprising, the unusual, the irregular and the absurd. It is evinced in vocal sound and/or facial expression... It acts as a release after tension. It produces a sense of well-being and happiness”. Moreover, Raskin (1985: 1) maintains that laughter is more often than not the expression of a feeling of funniness. Furthermore, Max Herzberg and Leon Mones who are quoted in Raphaelson-West (1989: 140) argues that humour is an enjoyable juggling with social taboos, with this or that forbidden action or custom. It is playing with illusions until truth is illuminated as never before. Finally, the Oxford Dictionary (Hornby, 2005) defines humour as the quality in something that makes it funny or amusing. Pun, joke, irony, and wordplay can be classified under verbal humour, which this research is concerned about.

### 4.4.2 (Un)translatability of humour

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For the sake of both research and the subtitling profession it would be useful to see how humour is treated when subtitled into Arabic. Its translation needs special attention for reasons that were discussed in section 2.3.3 and for reasons that will become apparent soon. Vandaele (2002c) suggests that “the dearth of serious work on humour translation in translation studies suggests that humour translation is qualitatively different from ‘other types’ of translation and, consequently, one cannot

write about humour translation in the same way one writes about other types of translation.” Similarly, Leibold (1989: 109) argues that the translation of humour is a stimulating challenge as it requires the accurate decoding of a humorous speech in its original context, the transfer of that speech in a different and often disparate linguistic and cultural environment, and its reformulation in a new utterance which successfully recaptures the intention of the original humorous message and evokes in the target audience an equivalent *pleasurable* and *playful* response. Moreover, Newmark (2003: 126) maintains that expression of humour may be modified by cultural factors. Carrell as quoted in Bell (2007: 373) identifies two reasons for an interlocutor’s failure to recognize a joke as such: an inability to identify the form of the joke text or a lack of the necessary scripts to interpret the text as a joke. But the question that keeps repeating itself is whether humour, when translated, has the same effect on the audience as the ST has. For this question to be answered, it is important to investigate what both theorists and practitioners think about this issue, then analyze the Arabic subtitles of the American sitcom *Friends*<sup>5</sup> (Crane and Kauffman, 1995) and after that carry out an experiment on 3 episodes of this famous TV show.

#### 4.4.3 Case Study (C): *Friends*

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##### 4.4.3.1 Introduction

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Taking into account what has been written in chapter 2 about the (un)translatability of humour and the challenge(s) that cultural differences pose in this regard, subtitling humour into Arabic is particularly challenging. The deeper the gap between any two cultures, the more difficult it is to bridge it. For example, an Italian subtitler may face fewer difficulties when subtitling the American sitcom *Friends* than one subtitling the same series into Arabic as Hayek (see Appendix E) maintains. Hayek also argues that “It is impossible for the translated humour to have the same effect as that of the original due to cultural differences.” Moreover, Baradhi (see Appendix C) and

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<sup>5</sup> *Friends* is based in Manhattan and is about 6 young friends who struggle to find success and happiness in life when things never go straightforwardly. Due to its great success, *Friends* has been subtitled into many languages, among which is Arabic.

Khuddro (see Appendix A) share a similar view point to each other. Likewise, El-Hakim (see Appendix B) and Khuddro both believe that culture makes it impossible for humour to have the same effect as it has in the source text. When Khuddro was asked to subtitle *Great Moments of Humour in British Comedy*, for example, he could not manage to translate more than 5% of the jokes due to culture.

In order to come up with a possible solution for the problem, the interviewees were asked if the degree of faithfulness to the text and the space of freedom which the subtitler has may affect the quality of humour. In other words, their task was to discover if it makes any difference if priority is given to the joke rather than the text. In this sense, El-Hakim argued that priority should be to try and marry the message/joke with the initial script i.e. try and find the closest equivalent, and if this is not possible, to come up with a local equivalent. However, for Khuddro and Kaadi both the joke and the text are equally important, and both complement each other to convey the message requested. Moreover, Hayek maintained that it all depends on where the material is to be shown. If audiovisuals are subtitled for Saudi Arabia, then the subtitler is completely restricted, but if they are subtitled for the Lebanese market, then the subtitler has more freedom to express the humour of the ST which will make it more effective. Baradhi believed that subtitlers are usually faithful to the text rather than the joke, especially when they translate the script without watching the audiovisual material.

In fact, regardless of the degree of freedom that the subtitlers may have, culture will still pose a challenge, as the following examples from *Friends* will show. There are many sitcoms which were also investigated by the researcher and which are similar to *Friends* in the sense that they are full of wordplays, cultural and sexual-based jokes. *Saved by the Bell* (Bobrick, 1989), *Grace under Fire* (Lorre, 1993), *The Golden Girls* (Lorre, 1993) and *City Guys* (Corrigan et al., 1997) are all famous sitcoms that were subtitled and broadcast on Arab TV channels. Nevertheless, *Friends* remains the most popular series ever, and is rebroadcast year after year on many TV channels, even at the time of writing these lines.

The jokes below are divided into jokes that rely on sexual references, jokes that rely on puns and those that rely on cultural references. Each of the following jokes will be followed by commentary (decision details) on the translation and possible alternatives that could make the jokes funnier in Arabic. These alternatives are based on skopos theory detailed in chapter 2.

Skopos theory allows the translator to function according to the skopos defined: 'be humorous' and 'polite'. The aim of *Friends* is to entertain its viewers and make them laugh throughout the 20 minutes. In the same way, the Arabic translator has the responsibility to entertain the Arabic-speaking audiences and make them laugh, which is not as easy as it seems. The first barrier that s/he is expected to deal with is taboo words. The second is cultural references including wordplays. So, in the following three sections, we will find out more about how skopos theory helps translator deal with such barriers.

#### 4.4.3.2 Jokes with sexual connotation

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Raskin (1985: 148) argues that sexual humour has been researched by suppression/release-based theories<sup>6</sup>, and the prevalent thesis has been that sex, along with other physiological functions and direct violence, is normally suppressed and repressed, and humour provides an outlet for its release in a way which may be more appropriate and socially and ethically acceptable than the more direct and natural way. Moreover, (1992: 8) Chiaro maintains that in 'civilized' societies dirty jokes are considered amusing especially if they concern newly-weds or sexual initiation. However, according to Chiaro, such jokes undergo variations from culture to culture. Hayek (see Appendix E) proposes that "the English-language humour relies for a good deal on sexual language, something that does not suit the Arab culture. For instance, if *Friends* is subtitled into Arabic, it will lose much of its humour due to censorship. So, it would be a waste of effort to do so."

Jokes that can be classified under this category are many in *Friends* and are always either omitted or euphemized, thus reducing the effect of the joke as Hayek argued. In the following examples, we will look at the way such jokes are subtitled and the extent to which the translation is able to elicit the same laughter in the target language. It should be remembered that such types of joke can be considered international and not restricted to a particular culture. However, censorship will still interfere to make the jokes less effective or have no effect at all. The examples below will be followed by a back translation from Arabic into English to show the

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<sup>6</sup> The advocates of this theory have maintained that a human being operates under a great number of constraints- to be logical, to think clearly, to talk sense. For more on this theory, see Raskin (1985: 38).

difference between the original and translated dialogue and, as a result, the changes that are made on jokes. Moreover, each joke will be underlined in both texts to identify the differences more easily. Then it will be followed by a commentary and a suggestion for a more functional translation.

For instance, in joke number 8 below, Ross asks Mona to stop flattering Rachel by saying to her “don’t kiss a\*\*” which was translated as “stop flattering” which does not sound funny. The closest euphemised equivalent to ‘a\*\*’ is ‘قفى’ or ‘مؤخره’, both of which can be interpreted as ‘back’. But it would still be offensive to say that someone is kissing someone’s back. Therefore, it can be translated functionally as ‘don’t kiss feet’ to make it funnier than ‘stop flattering’. To kiss someone’s feet in Arabic is said about someone begging for something which may work here since Mona is in a way trying to become friend with Rachel but she exaggerates to do so. As was mentioned, the functional approach permits paraphrasing and substitution while trying to keep the speaker’s intention which is, in the above example, to stop Mona in a funny way. More examples of this type are discussed below.

**SAMPLE 1: CONTEXT:**<sup>7</sup> Rachel gives birth to a baby girl (Emma) and she is worried that she may have to raise her alone. Joey tells her that Ross, the father of the baby and who has a new girl friend, will help her:

**Joey:** What about Ross?

**Rachel:** Oh, please! He’ll be with his real family,  
The twins and little miss boobs.

راشيل: أرجوك، سيكون مع عائلته الحقيقية...  
مع التوأمين و الزوجة الجديدة.

**Rachel:** Please! He’ll be with his real family,  
the twins and the new wife.

The subtitler chose ‘the new wife’ to euphemize ‘Miss Boobs’, removing any sense of humour in the joke. With the same degree of freedom that the subtitler has given to himself to change the word, he can replace it with a funnier expression such as: ‘ملكه جمال القباحة’ ‘Miss Ugliness’ if he wanted to sound more polite, and so on.

<sup>7</sup> This joke is taken from season 8, episode 24 (2002), ‘The One Where Rachel Has a Baby’.

**SAMPLE 2: CONTEXT:**<sup>8</sup> Jim dates Phoebe for the first time. He is rather rude. While they are in a restaurant, he starts looking at her and flattering her:

**Jim:** (to Phoebe) I'm sorry, I'm staring.  
It is just that you have the most beautiful eyes...  
and your breasts! Hmmm!!!.

جيم: آسف لأنني أصدق فيك،  
لكن لديك أجمل عيون...  
وقوامك.

**Jim:** (to Phoebe) I'm sorry, I'm staring.  
It is just that you have the most beautiful eyes...  
and your figure.

'Breast' which is a euphemism of 'boobs' is still euphemized with the word قوام 'figure' and, therefore, humour is lost. Again, the subtitler may replace it with 'ويا للهول' 'and oh, how terrible' which is considered a funny expression in Arabic and which sounds like saying 'what a hot woman you are'.

**SAMPLE 3: CONTEXT:**<sup>9</sup> Another boyfriend Phoebe breaks up with. They have a short argument after which he leaves her flat. On his way out, Phoebe says to him:

**Phoebe:** So long! Don't let the best door in the world  
hit you in the a\*\* on your way out.

فيبي: الوداع! لا تدع أفضل بلب في العالم  
يصدمك في طريقك للخروج.

**Phoebe:** So long! Don't let the best door in the world  
hit you on your way out.

<sup>8</sup> This joke is taken from season 8, episode 17 (2002), 'The One with the Tea Leaves'.

<sup>9</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 18 (2002), 'The One in Massapequea'.



The joke 'hit you in the a\*\*' is omitted. The reason seems to be that the subtitler could not think of an alternative, so he lost the joke. One option could be to say 'انتبه' 'Careful not to hit the best door in the world so that it does not break'.

**SAMPLE 4: CONTEXT:**<sup>10</sup> Chandler is at home playing with the gambling machine he bought. His wife Monica asks him if he has become any better at the game. He replies:

**Chandler:** I got good. I played this game  
all day and now I rule at it.  
They should change the name of it  
to Mrs. Chandler.

تشاندلر: لقد تحسنت، لعبت بالآلة  
طوال النهار و أصبحت الملك فيها.

يجب أن يغيروا اسمها  
الى "الآنسة تشاندلر".

**Chandler:** I got good. I played this game  
all day and now I am the king.

They should change the name of it  
to Mrs. Chandler.

When Chandler said 'now I rule at it', he looked at Monica with suspicion. He meant to say to her, although he does not look sure, that he is the man of the house: he wears the trousers. The subtitler translated this sentence as 'now I am the king at it', which means that he is top at playing the game and no one can compete with him, a choice that does not elicit any laughter and does not indicate what Chandler aims at. An alternative for the word 'king' could be 'الرجل', 'the man', which will help the audience get what Chandler means, especially when he says: 'They should change

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<sup>10</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 12 (2002), 'The One Where Joey Dates Rachel'.

the name of it to Mrs. Chandler.' This word will also help the audience find a connection between the facial expression of Chandler and what he says: 'I rule at it'.

**SAMPLE 5: CONTEXT:**<sup>11</sup> Joey and Rachel are at a restaurant. The following conversation takes place:

**Joey:** Is it hot in here?

**Rachel:** No. Not for me, but why don't you take off your sweater?

**Joey:** I would, but this is a nice place and my T-shirt has a picture of Calvin doing Hobbs.

**Rachel:** Oh, my God! Really? Can I see it?

**Joey:** Yea, sure.

**Rachel:** Huh, wow, I wouldn't think Hobbs would like that so much.

جوي: هل الجو حار هنا؟

راشيل: لا، ليس بالنسبة لي  
لكن لم لا تخلع كنزتك؟

جوي: كنت لأفعل لكنه مكان فخم  
و على القميص صورة (كالفن) و (هوبس)

راشيل: رباة! حقاً؟ أيمكنني رؤيتها؟  
جوي: أجل بالطبع.

راشيل: لا أظن أن (هوبس) سيحب هذا كثيراً.

**Joey:** Is it hot in here?

**Rachel:** No. Not for me, but why don't you take off your sweater?

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<sup>11</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 16 (2002), 'The One Where Joey Tells Rachel'.

**Joey:** I would, but this is a nice place and my T-shirt has a picture of Calvin and Hobbs.

**Rachel:** Oh, my God! Really? Can I see it?

**Joey:** Yea, sure.

**Rachel:** Huh, wow, I wouldn't think Hobbs would like that so much.

The phrase 'Calvin doing Hobbs' (having sexual intercourse) is again euphemised and even omitted and as a result omitting the humour. If the subtitler had substituted it with 'Calvin urinating on Hobbs', 'كالفين يبول على هوبس', or 'Calvin vomiting on Hobbs', 'كالفين يقيئ على هوبس', then it, and the joke that follows: 'I would not think Hobbs would like that so much' would make more sense in terms of humour.

**SAMPLE 6: CONTEXT:**<sup>12</sup> Rachel in her office speaking to her colleague, Gavin, who is attracted to Heather, the secretary who enters the office to pick up some files:

**Rachel:** I'm just happy...I'm sorry, obviously Heather's a\*\* has something more important to say, so I'll just wait till it's finished.

**Gavin:** I was looking at the skirt. Or was it pants?  
I did not really see what happened below the a\*\* area.

**Rachel:** If you like looking at butts so much why don't you just go look at a mirror?

راشيل: أنا مسرورة...  
المعذرة؟ يبدو أن لدى قوام (هينر)

أشياء أهم تقولها

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<sup>12</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 8 (2001), 'The Stripper'.

لذلك سأنتظر حتى تنتهي.

**كيفن:** كنت أنظر الى تنورتها.

أم هل كان سروالاً؟

لم أر ما حصل تحت القوام.

**راشيل:** ان كنت تحب النظر الى القوام هكذا

لم لا تذهب و تنظر في المرأة؟

**Rachel:** I'm just happy...I'm sorry, obviously Heather's figure has something more important to say, so I'll just wait till it's finished.

**Gavin:** I was looking at the skirt. Or was it pants?

I did not really see what happened below her figure.

**Rachel:** If you like looking at figures so much why don't you just go look at a mirror?

In this three-part joke, the word 'a\*\*' occurred twice and the word 'butt' occurred once. The subtitler replaced all these words with 'قوام' 'figure' which caused the loss of the humour. If only he had put 'قفى' 'back' instead, then the humour would have been rescued. The word 'قفى' 'back', is a euphemised word for 'butt' or 'a\*\*' but a polite one that can be used.

**SAMPLE 7: CONTEXT:**<sup>13</sup> Phoebe and Rachel are in a restaurant with a guy that Rachel is dating for the second time. He orders some wine but they get him the wrong brand ('74'). He gets angry at the waiter. Rachel tries to calm him down but Phoebe supports him saying:

**Phoebe:** The '74' is absolute p\*\*\*.

**فيبي:** نبيذ 1974 طعمه سيئ.

**Phoebe:** The 1974 has a bad taste.

<sup>13</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 15 (2002), 'The One with the Birthing Video'.

Instead of saying 'The 74 has a bad taste' which does not sound funny, it may be funnier to say 'نبيذ 1974 طعمه كبول الطفل' 'the 74 tastes like a baby's urine'.

**SAMPLE 8: CONTEXT:**<sup>14</sup> Mona is expressing her admiration for Rachel as she has heard a lot about her from Ross:

**Ross:** (To Mona) Oh, come on Mona, don't kiss a\*\*.

روس: كفى يا (منى) لا تتملقى.

**Ross:** Oh, come on Mona, stop flattering.

The subtitler avoids 'a\*\*' as usual by either omitting or euphemising it, paying no attention to the humour behind it. 'Flatter' is not equal to 'kiss a\*\*'. So, 'كفاك تقبيل أقدام' 'stop kissing feet' would be more humorous than 'stop flattering'.

#### 4.4.3.3 Puns and wordplays

The following examples of puns and wordplays show another obstacle that subtitlers face in translating humour and illustrate how wordplays are dealt with by subtitlers and what methods are used to retain the same or a similar effect. Attardo (2002: 190) argues that each pun will consist of a set of different features which may or may not be paralleled in the TL structure and/or text. Those puns that exhibit in the SL a set of features which is consistent with a set of features in the TL, such that the pragmatic goals of the translation are fulfilled, will be translatable. A pun that does not will be untranslatable. Gottlieb attributed the loss (1997b: 216) in wordplay translation to three factors: language-specific constraints, media-specific constraints, and human constraints which relate to the subtitler. Moreover, according to El-Hakim (see Appendix B), puns are mostly not translated into Arabic because they are difficult to deal with. Hayek (see Appendix E) also believes that puns have to do with culture and that the fact that the client requires a translation of a film in 24 hours makes the task even more complicated. Moreover, Baradhi (see Appendix C) argues that in most cases, puns are translated literally. Furthermore, Khuddro (see Appendix A) maintains that if the translator is dynamic in his translation and uses

<sup>14</sup> This joke is taken from Season 9, Episode 12 (2003), 'The One with Pheobe's Rats'.

equivalent wordplays, then it is doable. This reminds us of the complications of translating humour which were summarised by Delabastita (1994) as follows:

When attempting to describe how wordplay is translated one obviously needs to rely on an operational definition of the pun, including criteria for describing and comparing puns in terms of (say) their formal structure, semantic structure, underlying linguistic mechanism, textual function, and/or any other aspect deemed relevant to comparison. (1994: 232)

In the following examples we will be looking at the extent to which the translator can deal with the puns of the source text. Each of them will be followed by a commentary as well as a suggestion for an alternative translation which will try to achieve three aims: 1) be humorous, 2) retain as much of the pun as possible, and 3) be polite. The priority is to retain humour rather than the quality of the pun which in most cases is untranslatable, taking into consideration the linguistic as well as the cultural differences between English and Arabic as the examples below will show.

**SAMPLE 9: CONTEXT:**<sup>15</sup> Rachel goes to a private massage parlour for a massage session. Surprisingly, she finds Phoebe working there. Phoebe had always criticised such centres and refused to work at them as they harm small businesses.

**Phoebe:** (Giving Rachel an excuse why she lied about working there)

Because I was ashamed, ok?

I sold out for the cash!

And then they give me benefits like medical,  
and dental, and a 401K.

فبيبي: لأنني كنت أشعر بالحجل.  
لقد تنازلت من أجل المال

و هم يقدمون لي منافع مثل الرعاية الصحية  
four oh wunk وعلاج الأسنان و

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<sup>15</sup> This joke is taken from Season 9, Episode 21 (2003), 'The One with the Fertility Test'.

Phoebe spells this number as: four oh wunk. The subtitler apparently felt that it is best to write it in English and as a result leave it to the audience who have knowledge in English to interpret. The audience who relied on the Arabic translation did not get the joke so there should be a compensation for this loss. An alternative option could be to give priority to humour and lose the pun. So, if the word 'الصرع', 'epilepsy' replaces 401K, then this will elicit more laughter than writing 'four oh wunk'. The word 'epilepsy' is usually used in Arabic to describe someone who behaves irrationally. Thus, the joke would indicate that Phoebe, due to her behaviour, may need treatment for this illness sometime in the future.

**SAMPLE 10: CONTEXT:**<sup>16</sup> Phoebe goes to visit Monica at her workplace. While working in the kitchen, Monica introduces her to Tim, her colleague:

**Monica:** Tim? This is Phoebe. Phoebe, this is Tim, my new sous chef.

**Phoebe:** (to Tim) Oh, so you're Monica's boss?

**Tim:** Actually, she's my boss. Sous is French for under.

**Phoebe:** Oh, I sous stand.

Would you say your Pesto is the besto?

**Tim:** I don't know, but I would say it's pretty goodo.

...

**Phoebe:** Uh, Monica! Oh, my God! I had the best time with Tim last night. He's so sweet. Oh, I can't wait to get sousneath him.

مونیکا: (تيم) أقدم لك (فبيي)  
(فبيي) هذا (تيم)، مساعد رئيس الطهاة.

فبيي: إذا أنت مدير (مونیکا)؟  
تيم: بالأحرى هي مديرتي

باللغة الفرنسية تعني الكلمة "مساعد"  
فبيي: لقد ساعدتني وفهمت.

<sup>16</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 5 (2001), 'Rachel's Date'.

هل تقول أن "البيستو" هي الأفضل؟  
تيم: لا أعرف، لكنني أقول أنها جيدة.

...

فبيبي: مونيك! يا إلهي!  
أمضيت وقتاً ممتعاً للغاية مع (تيم)

ليلة أمس فهو لطيف فعلاً.  
أنتظر رؤيته مجدداً بفارغ الصبر.

**Monica:** Tim? This is Phoebe. Phoebe, this is Tim, my new sous chef.

**Phoebe:** (to Tim) Oh, so you're Monica' boss?

**Tim:** Actually, she's my boss. Sous is French for assistant.

**Phoebe:** Oh, you assisted me to understand.

Would you say your Pesto is the best?

**Tim:** I don't know, but I would say it's pretty good.

...

**Phoebe:** Uh, Monica! Oh, my God! I had the best time  
with Tim last night. He's so sweet.  
Oh, I can't wait to see him again.

This is a wordplay that the subtitler succeeded in handling somehow. He translated the French word 'sous' as 'مساعد' or 'assistant' rather than 'تحت' or 'under' as it should literally be. If he had translated 'under' literally, then the joke would have been lost. So, the word 'assist' gets the first joke: 'I sous stand' which the subtitler translated as 'You assisted me to understand'. However, when Phoebe uses the same word for a second time in the last three lines of the joke 'I can't wait to get sousneath him', the subtitler could not use the word 'assistant' again to interpret the joke. He simply translated it as 'I can't wait to see him' instead of 'I can't wait to be his assistant', لا، 'أستطيع الإنتظار حتى أصبح مساعدته', which preserves and Arabic equivalent the word 'sous' as well as the humour and which will make the audience think that Phoebe is eager to get married to him as soon as possible, something which sounds funny for her to say.



Moreover, another wordplay that Phoebe makes during the same conversation with Tim is unfortunately lost in Arabic. 'Your pesto is the besto' is translated as 'Your pesto is the best', and therefore, the humour as well as the wordplay are lost. Another option could be 'Your pesto is pronto'. 'Pronto' (برونتو) is an Italian word which is popular in the Arab world and which means 'great' or 'fantastic' and it all iterates with Pesto, too.

**SAMPLE 11: CONTEXT:**<sup>17</sup> Rachel and Ross hire a male nanny to look after their baby. Chandler is surprised at this decision.

**Chandler:** (to Ross and Rachel) You got a man as a nanny?

You got a manny?

تشاندلر: وظفتما رجلاً يؤدي عمل المربية؟

وظفتما "مربياً رجلاً"؟

**Chandler:** You got a man to carry the job of a nanny?

You got a male nanny?

Again, the pun is lost and the subtitler chose a literal translation as we can see, but with no compensation for the lost joke. One option could be to translate 'nanny' into Arabic as 'مُرضعة' which literally translates as 'breast-feeding nanny', a job that cannot be given to man. So, the translation will become: 'وظفتما رجلاً يؤدي عمل المرضعة؟', 'You got a man as a breast-feeding nanny? You got a (male) breast-feeding nanny?' The pun is lost but humour is preserved.

...

**SAMPLE 12: CONTEXT:**<sup>18</sup> Joey introduces his sister, who is interested in the field of fashion, to Rachel, who works as a designer at Ralf Lawrence:

**Joey:** Well, I'll let you two fash...ists get down to business.

جوي: حسناً، سأترككما تعملان معاً يا "فاشيستا" الموضة.

**Joey:** Well, I'll let you two fashion fashitta work together

The word 'fashitta' actually has no meaning but is derived from the word fashion. The

<sup>17</sup> This joke is taken from Season 9, Episode 6 (2002), 'The One with the Male Nanny'.

<sup>18</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 10 (2001), 'The One with Monica's Boots'.

pun here is that Joey wanted to find the doer of the noun fashion, so he said 'fashists', the same pronunciation as 'fascists', thus showing that he is bad at derivations and at the same time playing on words by indicating that Rachel and his sister are authoritative or strong. The subtitler's choice misses this combination as 'fashitta' carries no meaning. So, the following translation is probably funnier: 'I'll let you two fascists...of fashion get down to business', 'سأترككما تعملان معاً يا فاشيتا ... الموضة', 'الموضة'. This sentence does the same job that the original one did. In other words, it leaves the audiences to think about what Joey means by 'fascists'.

...

**SAMPLE 13: CONTEXT:**<sup>19</sup> Rachel gets a new job in Paris, so she decides to leave. She says goodbye to everyone except Ross. After she leaves, Ross complains about what has happened saying:

**Ross:** (to the friends) Unbelievable. She says goodbye to everyone but *me*.

**Monica:** Well, maybe she thought that with all of your history it could be, you know, implicit.

**Ross:** Well, it needs to be *plicit*.

روس: أكاد لا أصدق. لقد ودعت الجميع ما عداي.

مونیکا: ربما أرادت أن يكون الوداع... ضمنياً...

لطبيعة العلاقة بينكما

روس: حسنًا، لكن يجب أن يكون علنيًا.

**Ross:** Unbelievable. She says goodbye to everyone but *me*.

**Monica:** May be she wanted the goodbye to be...implicit,

due to the history of your relationship

**Ross:** Well, it needs to be explicit.

The subtitler's choice for 'implicit' is 'ضمنياً'. But to get the most from the joke, 'implicit' can be translated as 'تلميحا' (also meaning 'implicit'). As a result, 'plicit'/'علنيًا' could in this case be 'تلويحا' which means waving or indicating and which rhymes with 'تلميحا', and which sounds funny and rhymes with 'تلميحا'.

<sup>19</sup> This joke is taken from Season 10, Episode 16 (2003), 'The One with Rachel's Going Away Party'.

...

**SAMPLE 14: CONTEXT.**<sup>20</sup> Rachel visits Joey at his work place who introduces her to his colleague Kash, a famous actor. The following conversation takes place:

**Rachel:** Y' know, Joey thinks I'm some kind of a soap opera nut - which I'm not! I'm not.

راشيل: جوي يظنني مهووسة  
بالمسلسلات التلفزيونية الدرامية...

وهذا غير صحيح فعلاً.

**Rachel:** Joey thinks I'm some kind of a soap opera nut - which I'm not, indeed.

Once again the audience feels the irrelevance between the subtitles, the actors' facial expressions and the laughter they hear. Rachel plays on words claiming that she is not a soap opera nut but in fact she means the opposite by repeating 'I'm not, I'm not'. So, in order for the subtitle to make sense and sound funnier, although the wordplay will be lost, the joke can be translated as: 'Joey thinks that I'm a soap opera nut - which I am indeed. I am indeed', 'جوي يظنني مهووسة بالمسلسلات التلفزيونية ... وأنا ، 'كذلك فعلاً ... أنا كذلك'. What makes this sentence funny is that when Rachel says that 'Joey thinks...', it is assumed that he has a wrong perception about her and that she wants to correct it. But one becomes surprised when she confirms, instead of negating, what Joey thinks about her, something that elicits laughter.

...

**SAMPLE 15: CONTEXT.**<sup>21</sup> Phoebe wants to get married and she asks Joey to stand in for her father in the wedding since he has always been her closest and wisest friend.

**Phoebe:** Yeah, you've... you know, sort of been like a dad to me. I mean, you've always, you know, looked out for me and shared your wisdom...

**Joey:** I am pretty wisdomous.

<sup>20</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 5 (2001), 'Rachel's Date'.

<sup>21</sup> This joke is taken from Season 10, Episode 12 (2004), 'The One with Phoebe's Wedding'.

جوي: أنا حكيم جداً.

Joey: I'm very wise.

Joey's inability to derive nouns and adjectives is one source of wordplays in *Friends*. The translation 'very wise' does not cause a laugh like 'wisdomous' which Joey derives from the noun 'wisdom' that proceeded in the previous sentence. Instead of 'very wise', 'أنا...حكيم جداً؟', we can say: 'Me...wise?' or: 'How happy I am...I am wise', 'يا لسعادتي...أنا حكيم'. Both options sound as if Joey is surprised to know that he is wise since he considers himself the opposite, but the wordplay is lost again.

#### 4.4.3.4 Cultural jokes

In *Friends*, jokes that are based on cultural references outnumber those based on puns or sexual connotations. But what distinguishes the cultural jokes from the rest is that while in the sexual and wordplay jokes the subtitler has the chance to compensate the ST humour depending on his experience, this chance almost disappears in cultural jokes. The reason is that jokes that rely on culture presuppose that the audience is familiar with the contexts of such jokes. For example, when Phoebe says to Rachel "You are like Ed McMahon...", it is presumed that the audience are familiar with this character and what he did. To put it differently, Hay, who is quoted in Bell (2007: 380), asserts that full support of humour implicates agreement with the message, including any attitudes, presuppositions or implicatures contained within it. Similarly, Raskin (1985: 180) argues that cultural competence has to be acquired separately from linguistic competence which is required for understanding wordplays. In this sense, cultural jokes are similar to encyclopaedic knowledge. They capture stereotypes which are at best crude approximations of reality. Lack of this encyclopaedic knowledge results in the feeling that, as Raphaelson-West (1989: 132) expresses it, there are many jokes which may mean the same thing semantically, but in terms of pragmatics and culture, there is something sorely missing which makes the joke untranslatable. On the other hand, jokes that depend on sexual or linguistic references require little or even no knowledge of the context in which they are said.

In the following examples of cultural jokes, there will be no back translation from Arabic into English as was done with the previous jokes since the translations

are almost exact copies of the originals. However, each joke will still be analysed and substituted by a suggested translation which is supposed to elicit more laughter than the first. As explained above, because of the lack of encyclopaedic knowledge on the part of the target audience regarding cultural references, it was decided to expand the joke by adding and/or deleting information that it helps it helps make better sense and become funnier, as we will see in the following examples.

**SAMPLE 16: CONTEXT.**<sup>22</sup> Rachel is pregnant and hesitant to tell the father. Phoebe encourages her to go to his house and knock on his door and tell him:

**Phoebe:** (sarcastic) Yeah. You're just gonna knock on his door  
and change his life forever.

You're like Ed McMahon  
except without the big check,  
or the raw sexual<sup>23</sup> magnetism.

فيبي: ما عليك سوى أن تطرقي بابه  
وتغيري حياته للأبد.

وكأنك (ايد ماكماهون)  
لكن من دون الشيك الكبير،  
أو الإنجذاب المجرد.

Ed McMahon is an American comedian and game-show host and is famous for his presentation of 'American Family Publishing' sweepstakes. He arrives unannounced at the home of the winners to give them a check. The joke will not be effective on the Arabic-speaking audiences since they do not know who McMahon is and what the big check is. If we want them to know what McMahon does, a possible solution could be to say: 'Just like 'كبرنامج (ايد ماكماهون)/ الذي يطرق الباب بجائزة مالية / و أنت تطرقين الباب بمصيبة '، Ed McMahon's show/ in which he knocks at doors with a financial prize/ but you knock at the door with a disaster'. Here, the last English subtitle 'or the raw sexual magnetism' can be deleted to allow more space to introduce the audience to Ed's programme so that they realize the joke.

<sup>22</sup> This joke is taken from Season 8, Episode 2 (2001), 'The One with the Red Sweater'.

<sup>23</sup> The word 'sexual' was omitted in the translation.

**SAMPLE 17: CONTEXT:**<sup>24</sup> Joey, an actor, wants his eyebrows trimmed as the director of the soap opera he acts in asked him to do so in order to play the role of a woman. He asks Chandler if he knows a good place. Chandler offers to do them for him since he is used to do it:

**Chandler:** (to Joey) Ok, you know how most kids get their allowance from mowing the lawn or taking out the garbage.

Well I earned mine by plucking the eyebrows of my father and his "business" partners.

**Joey:** Oh my God!

**Chandler:** Well, I guess you don't need my help Victor Victoria!

تشاندلر: أنت تعلم أن معظم الأطفال يحصلون على مصروفهم  
جاء جز العشب أو إخراج النفايات...

أما أنا فقد حصلت على مصروفي من انتزاع  
شعر حاجبي أبي وشركاءه في العمل.

روس: يا إلهي!

تشاندلر: حسناً، أعتقد أنك لست بحاجة لي يا (فيكتور فيكتوريا).

*Victor Victoria* (Edwards, 1982), according to The Internet Movie Database, is a comedy film about Victor, a poverty-stricken soprano trying to find work in Paris in the 1930s. With the help of a worldly-wise nightclub singer, she invents her alter-ego Victor, a female impersonator who is hired to sing at a fashionable night spot: "You want me to be a woman pretending to be a man pretending to be a woman?" In order to make sense of the joke, *Victor Victoria* should be defined. So, one may say: 'Then you don't need me/ female impersonator Victor Victoria'.

<sup>24</sup> This joke is taken from Season 9, Episode 13 (2003), 'The One Where Monica Sings'.

**SAMPLE 18: CONTEXT.**<sup>25</sup> A rumour goes around that Chandler is gay. Surprised, people start ringing him to congratulate him. Monica picks up the phone:

**Monica:** Hello? No, he is not at here.

Yeah. This is his wife.

Yeah, well it came as quite as a shock to me, too.

I guess I should have known. Yeah,

I mean, he just kept making me watch Moulin Rouge.

مونیکا: مرحباً. لا ليس هنا.

نعم، أنا زوجته

نعم. كانت صدمة بالنسبة الي كذلك.

أعتقد أنه كان عليّ معرفة ذلك،

فلطالما أرغمني على مشاهدة (مولان روج).

*Moulin Rouge* (Luhrmann, 2001), as summarized on IMDb (The Internet Movie Database), is the name of a night club where rich and poor alike come to be entertained by the dancers, but things take a wicked turn for Christian as he starts a deadly love affair with the star courtesan of the club, Satine. But her affections are also coveted by the club's patron, the Duke. A dangerous love triangle ensues as Satine and Christian attempt to fight all odds to stay together. But a force that not even love can conquer is taking its toll on Satine. To compensate, the subtitler may translate the joke as:

'الآن فهمت سبب هوسه بفيلم (مولان روج)/ وبطلان التي كانت ممزقة بين حبيبين' 'Now I understand his obsession/ with *Moulin Rouge*/ and the heroine who was torn between two lovers.' It is noticeable that the second Arabic translation is one word longer than the first. Only now the audience is able to understand that Chandler's feelings, since he is believed to be a gay, are torn between his love for Monica and his gay partner.

...

<sup>25</sup> This joke is taken from Season 9, Episode 17 (2003), 'The One with the Memorial Service'.

**SAMPLE 19: CONTEXT.**<sup>26</sup> The friends go to Barbados for a holiday. When they arrive at the hotel, Monica's hair has grown in size:

**Rachel:** Alright, I don't wanna alarm anybody, but Monica's hair is twice as big as it was when we landed!

**Monica:** Ok! When I go places with high humidity, it gets a little extra body, ok?!

**Chandler:** That's why our honeymoon photos look like me and Diana Ross!

راشيل: حسناً، أنا لا أريد إخافتكم،  
لكن شعر مونिका صار أكبر مرتين  
مما كان عليه قبل أن تهبط الطائرة.  
مونیکا: حسناً، في أماكن الرطوبة العالية،  
ينتفش شعري قليلاً.  
تشاندر: لهذا السبب تبدو صورنا في شهر العسل  
وكأنني بصحبة (ديانا روس).

Diana Ross is an American artist who has big hair. So, to avoid letting the audience think who Diana Ross is and to help them think about the joke instead, they should be given an idea about who she is: 'لهذا تبدو صور شهر العسل / وكأنني مع المغنية (ديانا روس)', 'That's why the honeymoon photos/ look like me and singer Diana Ross.'

...

**SAMPLE 20: CONTEXT.**<sup>27</sup> Ross is trying to get a grant for his research project. His colleague Charlie knows Professor Hobart who is responsible for giving grants to researchers. So she suggests introducing them to each other at a restaurant:

**Ross:** (to Charlie) I can't believe I'm about to meet Benjamin Hobart.

I've always thought of him as one of the people

I'd invite to my fantasy dinner party.

You think there's any chance he'll bring

Christie Brinkley or C-3PO?

روس: لا أصدق أنني سأقابل (بينجامين هوبارت)  
لطالما فكرت في دعوته الى حفلة عشاء خيالية.

<sup>26</sup> This joke is taken from Season 9, Episode 23 (2003), 'The One in Barbados'.

<sup>27</sup> This joke is taken from Season 10, Episode 6 (2003), 'The One with Ross' Grant'.



هل تظنين أن هناك احتمال بأن يحضر معه  
(كريستي برينكلي) أو (C-3PO)؟

Christie Brinkley is an American model who is famous for her charity work and supports different education bodies such as the Albert Einstein College of Medicine at Yeshiva University and Ross High School in New York. C-3PO is a protocol droid created by Anakin Skywalker in the *Star Wars* universe. Apparently, Ross needs this device for digging in his research project. Both names are translated literally and are in fact unknown to the audience. So, one option is to say:

‘هل سيحضر معه المُحسنة (كريستي برينكلي) / و رجل الحفر الآلي (سي 3 بي أو)؟’  
‘Will he bring the beneficent Christie Brinkley/ and the digging robot C-3PO?’ Since Ross is looking for a grand for his project, the words ‘beneficent’ and ‘digging robot’ which define Christie Brinkley and C-3PO, will make sense.

...

**SAMPLE 21: CONTEXT:**<sup>28</sup> Still at Barbados, and still Monica’s hair is big:

**Monica:** Phoebe?

**Phoebe:** Yeah?

**Monica:** I need to talk to you.

**Phoebe:** Are you leaving The Supremes?

مونیکا: فيبي؟

فيبي: نعم.

مونیکا: أريد التحدث إليك.

فيبي: هل قررت ترك "سوبريم"؟

‘The Supremes’ were an American female singing group which achieved mainstream success with Diana Ross as lead singer during the mid-1960s. In 1967, Motown president Berry Gordy renamed the group Diana Ross & The Supremes and replaced Ballard with Cindy Birdsong. Ross left to pursue a solo career in 1970 and was replaced by Jean Terrell, at which point the group’s name returned to The Supremes. As the audience presumably does not know either Diana Ross or the Supremes, it is best defining the phrase as: ‘singer, do’, ‘أبها المغنية، هل تودين ترك الفرقة؟’

<sup>28</sup> This joke is taken from Season 9, Episode 23 (2003), ‘The One in Barbados’.

you want to leave the band?'. The Supremes was deleted and replaced by 'the band' and the noun 'singer' was added to the sentence to make clear what Phoebe meant.

**SAMPLE 22: CONTEXT:**<sup>29</sup> The friends are sitting together and discussing which is more difficult to give up, sex or food:

**Phoebe:** Ross, how about you?

What would you give up, sex or food?

**Ross:** Food.

**Phoebe:** (to Ross) Ok, how about... uhm... sex or dinosaurs?

**Ross:** Oh my God. It's like Sophie's Choice.

فيبي: (روس)، ماذا عنك؟  
هل تتخلى عن الجنس أم الطعام؟  
روس: الطعام.  
فيبي: حسناً، الجنس أم الديناصورات؟  
روس: هذا بمثابة خيار (صوفي)

*Sophie's Choice* (Pakula, 1982) is a drama film about a Jewish woman who is forced by the Nazis to decide which of her two children will live and which will die. The audience can be told what Sophie's choice was by adding a few words and omitting 'Oh, my God' to create a space. So, the sentence becomes: 'هذا بمثابة خيار (صوفي)/ في '، 'This is like Sophie's choice to give up one of her two children'. This may make the joke funnier because the audience understands that choosing between dinosaurs or sex is as hard to Ross as it is to Sophie to give up one of her children. But before, the joke did not make sense because Sophie's choice was not defined.

...

**SAMPLE 23: CONTEXT:**<sup>30</sup> At the coffee house the friends are discussing whether to tell Joey that his business manager has died or not. They agree not to. However, they are worried that Phoebe may tell him.

**Chandler:** Unless Snoopy says it to Charlie Brown,  
think we are OK.

<sup>29</sup> This joke is taken from Season 10, Episode 10 (2004), 'The One with Sophie's Choice'.

<sup>30</sup> This joke is taken from Season 10, Episode 15 (2004), 'The One where Estelle Dies'.

تشاندلر: ما لم يخبر (سنوبي) (تشارلي بروان) بالموضوع،  
فنحن بخير.

Charlie Brown has no real enemies aside from intangible misfortune, though practically all his friends are blithely critical of him at some point. His dog Snoopy seldom treats him with overt respect. Since the audience does not know who Snoopy and Charlie are, the following translation is probably able to do this to a certain extent: 'ما لم يُخبر الجرو الواشي (سنوبي) صاحبه (تشارلي) بالأمر/ فنحن بخير' 'Unless the slanderer poppy Snoopy does not tell his owner Charlie/ we are OK'.

...

**SAMPLE 24: CONTEXT:**<sup>31</sup> The friends are saying farewell to Rachel who is leaving to France to start a new job there.

**Ross:** Oh, man! I can't believe she's actually leaving.

How am I gonna say goodbye to Rachel?

**Chandler:** I know, she's been such a big part of your life.

And it feels like...

when *Melrose Place* got cancelled.

روس: يا رجل، أكاد لا أصدق أنها سترحل.

كيف سأودع راشيل؟

تشاندلر: أعرف أنها جزء هام من حياتك...

ينتابك إحساس شبيه بذاك...

عندما توقف مسلسل (منزل ميلروس).

*Melrose Place* (Star, 1992) is a hit show created by Darren Star. It follows the lives and loves of a small group of people living in a Californian apartment complex. The friends are hinting that *Melrose Place* has been cancelled, *Friends* may also get cancelled and that this episode could be the last. But the Arabic-speaking audiences do not understand this message. Despite the fact that the subtitler added the words 'soap opera', this did not make the picture complete. So, 'friends' should be added to 'soap opera' so that the audience knows what the *Melrose Place* soap opera is about

<sup>31</sup> This joke is taken from Season 10, Episode 16 (2004), 'The One with Rachel's Going Away Party'.

so that the joke makes sense: 'It feels like when the friends' soap opera *Melrose Place* got cancelled', "ينتابك إحساس شبيه بذاك عندما توقف مسلسل الأصدقاء (منزل ميلروس)".

#### 4.4.3.5 Discussion

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The jokes above have tried to give further proof that subtitling is affected by the ideological, cultural, and technical issues that restrict the subtitler to a certain extent. As we saw, the subtitles had to be polite, concise and funny; something that is not easy to achieve. Like the sexual jokes, those jokes that rely on wordplay and cultural references were almost lost or at least they were not effective. Therefore, the lost humour can be attributed to the fact that the subtitler restricted himself to the source text and was imprisoned by it, taking into account the comparison that the audience may have made between the two texts and sacrificing the harmony that should exist between the subtitles, the actors' facial expressions and the laughter heard on the soundtrack. Added to this, as Gottlieb (1997b: 216) put it, is the lack of communicative translation which can be, but not necessarily is, attributed to the lack of talent, interest, or experience on the part of the translator. No one can deny that there are different issues in *Friends* that do not ring any bell in the Arab culture such as pregnancy outside marriage, swear words, and names of celebrities, places, films, sitcoms and cartoons which are the source of many jokes in the series.

As was mentioned, cultural references are harder to deal with than sexual ones which can be compensated somehow. In other words, it would be easier to elicit laughter from a translated sexual joke than to elicit laughter from a cultural one. This is because the subtitler can manoeuvre around sexual jokes but it is harder for him to do so with cultural ones. For example, 'a\*\*' can be translated as 'back', 'p\*\*\*' as 'urinate', 'boobs' or 'tits' as 'breast' and so on. But how can a subtitler explain to the audience the relationship between '*Victor Victoria*' or '*Claire Danes*', for instance, and the context in which they are mentioned? In fact, he needs to tell them why such names, for instance, are mentioned. To illustrate, when the friends were choosing a name for the baby that Rachel was expected to give birth to, Rachel chose 'Sandrine', a French name, if it was a girl and Ross chose 'Darwin' if it was a boy. Rachel objected to Ross's choice saying that her son would be beaten regularly in his school. Phoebe commented on this by saying that he (the boy) will be beaten by 'Sandrine'. Generally speaking, the audience is not familiar with the English-French

relationship and therefore the joke will not make sense for them. Concentrating on giving more information about many of the cultural references was a priority in this section in order for the jokes to make sense and sound funny.

The professionals interviewed agreed that translating humour was more difficult than any other genre. Having said this, it does not mean that it cannot be done, but the question is whether it can be done and still be funny. Depending on the examples that were analyzed from *Friends*, the following recommendations can be made. When skopos theory is used, it helps the subtitler define the purpose of the ST and as well the function of the TT by defining the commission of the translation which depends on the circumstances of the target culture and which can also be modified accordingly. This means that all different kinds of transfer procedures that lead to a functional target text such as cultural adaptation, paraphrase, expansion, reduction, omission, transposition and substitution are likely to be used as we saw in the examples above. The result is an approach that gives the translator a freedom of movement which allows him to replace obscene words with less offensive ones; to translate wordplays in a way that makes them funny, even if this means their loss; to define or illustrate cultural differences so that jokes make sense. In order to see if the suggested translations, and as a result the approach used in translating them, are viable, the experiment discussed in the next section was conducted.

#### 4.4.4 Experiment (III): *Friends*

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##### 4.4.4.1 Introduction

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In order to measure the effectiveness of the suggested translation approach, three randomly selected episodes of *Friends* were resubtitled. They were then shown to 10 viewers who were requested to compare the new and the old translation of the three episodes. Watching both translations should show which translation the audience prefers. In other words, the aim is to learn if the audience favours a more literal translation that is faithful to the source text, except when it comes to swear words, or rather a translation that functionally modifies the ST jokes to make them as humorous as possible in the TT.

#### 4.4.4.2 Data and participants

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Three episodes were chosen for this experiment and which were consecutively taken from Season 8, Episode 5: 'The One with Rachel's Date' (2001), Season 8, Episode 16: 'The One Where Joey Tells Rachel' (2002) and Season 9, Episode 12: 'The One with Phoebe's Rats' (2003). The reason for choosing three episodes is to guarantee as many different types of jokes as possible, thus having jokes that vary from wordplays to the sexualised and the cultural. The first translation was altered to make it more functional and realistic to the Arabic-speaking audiences. The ten participants that were chosen for the experiment were fans of *Friends*, and audiovisual comedy in general. Their English was not good enough to rely on the source text. Their age, education and nationality varied quite considerably. For reasons of space, the jokes that were modified for the experiment can be found in Appendix I.

#### 4.4.4.3 Description of experiment

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The experiment consisted of two stages: 1) observing the participants' response to the jokes in both versions and comparing them afterwards; 2) conducting a short interview with the viewers after they had watched both translations of each episode. The short interview's aim was to find out which version the participants found funnier and why, thus determining how effective the modified translation was. Before viewing began the participants were told that they were going to watch two translations of the same episode and that their task was to choose the one that they found more humorous. The three episodes, in both translations, were shown on three consecutive days; each day with an episode in both translations as watching them on the same day would be hard and less fruitful.

#### 4.4.4.4 Results and discussion

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During the showings, it was noticed that the participants interacted with the modified translation more. When they were asked to explain the reason, they replied that the second version made more sense than the first. In the first version, they could not find a link between the translation and the reason for the laughter they heard on the soundtrack. But in the second, modified one, the participants sensed the link between the laughter and the subtitles, which is why they interacted with the jokes more. Mohammed, 33, from Jordan, argued that it was funnier to say that Joey's T-

shirt had a picture of Calvin peeing on Hobbs (see sample 5 above) rather than just to say that the T-shirt had a picture of Calvin and Hobbs, which did not make sense as a joke. Similarly, Mohammed, 23, from Libya, found the conversation between Phoebe and Tim in Monica's workplace very funny. See Sample 10 above. When I asked him why, he said that he liked the wordplay or the funny rhyming of the words that they exchanged. Likewise, sample 11 appealed more to Izzat, 27, from Syria, in its modified version than the first one. The rest of the participants shared similar view points and gave examples about why they preferred the modified translation. None of them was in favour of the original translation, even though it was more literal and faithful to the source text.

Although the subtitler of the first version respected the audience by being faithful to the original text and applying maximum censorship on sex and taboo references, the audience was not impressed. There is no doubt that the subtitler took into account both the comparison that the audience might make between the two texts and the criticism that he would get for not censoring or euphemising sex and taboo references according to the norms. It should be kept in mind, however, that subtitles are usually, but not necessarily, made for those who do not understand the original dialogue and not for those who are able to compare texts. This makes it unlikely that the target audience who chose to watch the Arabic subtitled version of *Friends* would be able or keen to spot the differences between the texts. Second, there are euphemized words in Arabic that can still be used and yet be avertable to the audience. For example, the word "يبول" or "urinate" is officially used in hospitals and pharmacies; and the word "مؤخرة", a euphemised word for "a\*\*", is also a polite alternative which delivers the message.

The fact that the ten participants opted for the modified translation shows that the translator can allow himself more freedom and bear in mind that the audience s/he is translating for will mostly rely on the subtitles to understand the humour and that using the existing euphemised common taboo words will not offend this audience at all. Moreover, opting for the modified translation also indicates that the functional approach or skopos theory adopted for the subtitling of the three episodes managed to bridge the gap between the source and target texts and therefore make the audience laugh. Although the first skopos of the modified translation was to sound humorous, this was not possible until the intentions of the characters had

been interpreted into the target text by means of addition, reduction, paraphrasing and substitution.

To conclude, we saw in section 2.3.3 how there is almost a consensus (Nord, 1994; Barbe, 1996; Chiaro, 1992; Newmark, 2003; Taivalkoski-Shilov, 2008) on the difficulty of translating humour, including wordplays, as was also confirmed in the discussion above. The pragmatic (Attardo, 1994; Vandaele, 2002b) and equivalence (Leibold, 1989; Muhawi, 2002; Ghazala, 2007) approaches have been suggested by theorists to facilitate the job of translators as we saw in section 2.2. However, the experiments conducted here showed a good degree of the viability of the functional approach, since applying equivalents does not seem to be practical in the sense that it is difficult to find equivalences to cultural references or sexual jokes in Arabic, let alone wordplays. The aim of translating such types of audiovisual material is to bridge the gap between two cultures and entertain the audience, a task that the translator is responsible for. And since humour is a social and a cultural phenomenon, according to Jaskanen (1999: 30), a translator not only has to judge whether the TL reader understands the humour in a given text but also to know or guess whether the humour functions as humour in the target culture, something that makes the whole process complex.

## 4.5 Conclusion

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This chapter attempted to shed light on the barriers to subtitling into Arabic, mainly the subtitling of dialects, swear words, taboos and humour. It has tried to indicate how such barriers are dealt with by professionals through selecting some audiovisuals as case studies. *Educating Rita*, *London to Brighton* and *Friends* revealed to us the mistakes, at times, and the difficulties, at others, that result from subtitling such genres. One should not always attribute such mistakes to subtitlers who are torn between what the audience needs, the language available to them (written MSA) and what the screen can bear in terms of time and space. The interviewees made certain suggestions and clarified what can and cannot be done in subtitling. The researcher persisted in his efforts, believing that such limitations should not stop subtitlers from trying to find enhanced solutions to the problem, and, therefore, improve the quality of the subtitles. As a result, he suggested a few simple and handy techniques that might help to overcome these barriers. Then the



experiments tried to examine the viability and practicality of such solutions and find out the audience's needs and preferences in respect of translation.

Introducing the issue of dialects at the beginning of a film such as *Educating Rita* as was suggested at the beginning of this chapter, may not bridge the gap between the audience and the film but it can reduce it. In this way it can help in both delivering the message and entertaining or educating the audience. Likewise, reducing the number of omitted swear and taboo words and euphemising them using words that are even used in daily life, as was illustrated in 4.5, also helps to offer a more functional translation that expresses the mode and rhythm of the audiovisuals, and as a result, reflects the dialogue and message they want to deliver. Similarly, defining the skopos in humour translation and translating accordingly could be effective as the examples and the experiments tried to prove. It has to be admitted, however, that "absolute translation is impossible in principle" (Attardo, 2002: 191). But despite all the barriers, no translation of any type is impossible if a satisfactory translation approach guides it. Dubbing is also argued as a perfect alternative to such barriers. In dubbing, target dialects can be used to replace source ones and swear words can be largely censored as we will see in the following chapter.

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## *Chapter 5*

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### **DUBBING**

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#### **5.0 Overview**

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This chapter addresses dubbing as a solution to the obstacles that subtitlers face, mainly the subtitling of dialects, swearing and taboo words, and humour. Discussion of this issue was based on a questionnaire and an experiment and is supported by data from interviews conducted with professionals.

#### **5.1 Introduction**

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The previous chapter examined some of the problems that subtitlers are likely to face when they subtitle English-language audiovisuals into Arabic. Some micro-level solutions were suggested but another macro-solution remains possible. Dubbing as we discussed in chapter two, can be a solution to some of the problems of subtitling. Ferrari (2006: 124), for instance, argues that dubbing allows texts to become culturally and nationally specific, not only reconfiguring ‘myths’ for new audiences in new contexts, but also recounting such myths in the very language (including accents, dialects, and regional expressions) of the new audiences. Some of the interviewees agreed with this and emphasised the importance of using dialects in dubbing. Hayek (see Appendix E) from Pro Subtilting, Lebanon, maintains that humour and dialects are best transferred through dubbing rather than subtitling; but this might not be commercially wise as dubbing into dialects does not target the wider audiences of the Arab-speaking world who may not like or even fully understand another dialect.

This chapter aims at examining the extent to which dubbing into colloquial Arabic can be an alternative to subtitling or rather a solution to the particular theoretical and practical problems of subtitling that were dealt with in the previous chapter. This will be done in three stages. The first will examine the technical barriers to dubbing in general and to dubbing into Arabic in particular. The second will explore the mechanisms of the varieties of Arabic and the way they function by highlighting some of the syntactic and semantic differences between such dialects, mainly Egyptian, Syrian, Moroccan and Kuwaiti. This aims to bring to the surface the complications that lie beneath these varieties. Finally, in the third stage we will be examining how successful some of the audiovisuals dubbed into Arabic dialects are in the hope of determining why or whether dubbing into dialects can be commercially viable or not. But before we proceed it is important to have an idea about the history of dubbing into Arabic.

## 5.2 Case Study (D): *The Simpsons*

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### 5.2.1 Introduction

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The aim of analysing *The Simpsons* which was dubbed into Egyptian in 2005 is to look at 1) the way the translator, Amr Hosni, used this dialect to transfer the humour and the dialect(s) of the series and see how successful he was, 2) the approach which he adopted, and 3) the way the audience received the dubbed animations. This animated cartoon was chosen because a large part of its humour relies on the manipulation of language, a process which has to be examined in this study since we are talking about the transfer of source dialects into target ones.

*The Simpsons* is an American animated comedy cartoons created by Matt Groening first shown on Fox Network in 1989. The satirical sitcom is about an American family comprising Homer, Marge, Bart, Lisa and Maggie. Other characters are stereotypes of American society such as Mr, Burns, Krusty, Otto, Chief Wiggum, Barney, Moe and various other characters. The popularity of the show made Gleeson (1998: 1) claim that it will never be off the human race's screens as long as there is still something left to watch it on. The quality characters, the humour, the satire, the ambiguity and the creative language have all contributed to the popularity of the animations. Gleeson (ibid: 4) argued that the inventive use of language is one

of the reasons for the uniqueness of the programme. For example, the exclamations made by Homer such as “D’oh” and “Yoink” have become part of the English language. Moreover, the bizarre language spoken by Moe as well as other characters is used by the writers to reflect the bad educational system. For instance, he called the garage a ‘car-hole’ and asked Lisa “If you’re so sure what it ain’t, why don’t you tell us what it am?!” Having said this does not mean that the show relies on the vernacular alone to deliver the message. As has been mentioned, it is a lower middle-class family show that uses a mixture of middle-class and working-class American-English; and as language is one of the most important factors for the success of the series, it would be interesting to see how translators dealt with this when they translated the series into their target language(s).

### 5.2.2 *The Simpsons in different languages*

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Lorenzo et al (2003: 288) discusses the dubbing of *The Simpsons* into Spanish and concludes that due to the fact that the source and target cultures belong to the same cultural macrosystem (the West), the cultural references did not constitute a translation problem, although the tenor and register were altered on different occasions, something which was not justified. However, they gave examples about some of the techniques that are used to get the translation right. For instance, in the following situation, Homer went to the Argentinian doctor, Riviera, to have a hair transplant. While he was about to give Homer an injection, he said:

**RIVIERA:** These drugs will make the operation seem like *a beautiful dream* (singing)  
*Hello everybody.*

(Back translation from Spanish into English):

**RIVIERA:** This drug will make the operation seem like *a dream of the Pampa!*  
(singing) *Goodbye boys, my lifelong friends...*

Lorenzo et al (ibid: 287) maintains that the improvement which the translator made on the ST by naming a well known region of Argentina and by introducing a fragment of the lyrics of a tango song was a good choice, and can be considered easier to understand than that of the source text.

In 2006 Nigel Armstrong wrote an article about the translation of *The Simpsons* into French under the title: 'Translating *The Simpsons*: how popular is that?' Armstrong's answer to this question can be summarised as follows:

The translations of *The Simpsons* are indeed popular in the sense of being widely practiced. From a popular-cultural perspective, we can answer the question, taken as a genuine request for information, of how popular a translation of the show is by reiterating that the English-French translations we have discussed here show an increase in 'popularity' if by this we mean greater simplicity, or a shift in the direction of 'mass culture', through the loss of the multiple layers that the ST allusions provide. (2006: 214)

Dore (2009) discusses the translation of *The Simpsons* into Italian and came to the conclusion that the translators were able to create quality dubbing because of their creativity and expertise. Their introduction of language specific features like accents, dialects and sociolects for humorous purposes and which in turn proved the validity of this target-culture approach was a success, although it could be offensive<sup>32</sup>. Dore asks a Spanish friend of hers about whether accents had been used in the Spanish version of *The Simpson*. She replied they had not but hastened to add that using such accents could be seen as highly politically incorrect because of the great many problems of identity and unity that Spain suffers from.

### 5.2.3 *The Simpsons* and Egyptian Arabic

This popular animation series has been successfully dubbed into many languages and continues to be, although translators have adopted different translation methods that suit their target language and culture even if this has incurred some changes or losses. We saw above how the French and Spanish renderings of *The Simpsons* opted for simplicity while the Italian translation tried to retain and compensate for many regional aspects of the original cartoons that could be said to be complicated. So, it would be interesting to see what strategies the Egyptian translator adopted to dub the series into Egyptian Arabic.

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<sup>32</sup> It could be offensive in the sense that in some cases certain people of certain societies may not approve the idea of using the dialect they speak to represent them as a working class or uneducated.

There is no doubt that the task which the Egyptian translator had to carry out when translating *The Simpsons* was not easy, taking into consideration the different factors that contributed to the success of the American version. After all, as Ferrari (2009: 34-5) put it, *The Simpsons* represents a challenge for adaptation because it is deeply rooted in American popular culture. According to the business development director at MBC, Michel Costandi (ABCNews, 2005), when the executives at MBC TV (Middleeast Broadcasting Centre) decided to dub *The Simpsons*, they thought that the cartoon "will open a new horizon". The aim was to attract teenagers as well as children. So, what MBC did was to alter certain cultural references in the show to suit the Arab culture: donut became cake, beer became soda, and hot-dogs became beef sausages, and so on. They also hired famous Egyptian actors and actresses to dub the cartoons. The most important decision which they took was to choose the language or dialect into which *The Simpsons* was to be dubbed.

The importance of deciding on a language variety comes from the fact that the show was supposed to target the younger generation which constitutes 60% of the Arab population. Thus choosing the vehicle that would carry *The Simpsons* was crucial to reach the vast majority of this audience. It is the habit to dub children and young adult cartoons into MSA. However, as Whitaker (2005) believes, the challenge of rendering expressions such as "doh!" and "scrumdillyumptious" into the formal classical tongue proved just too daunting. In this case, and since the humour in *The Simpsons* is largely dependent on vernacular English, there was no choice but to compensate the humour through another vernacular, notwithstanding the fact that this approach is not very common. Lindsay Wise of the Adham Centre for Television Journalism at the American University in Cairo is quoted in Whitaker (Whitaker, 2005) arguing that the decision to have the characters of the show speak in Egyptian dialect is unusual: "Dubbed foreign cartoons tend to be put into classical Arabic for educational purposes. This is much more casual." In the following paragraphs we will be looking into the strategy which the translator adopted to compensate for the humour of the TT and how effective this strategy was.

To begin with, the Egyptian translator tried to retain the humour of the source text by retaining the tone and register of the characters, using what is supposed to be vernacular and funny words and expressions that are used in daily Egyptian. For example, in the episode 'Oh, Brother, Where art Thou?', Herbert, Homer's brother, asks Lisa if she is the little hell-raiser that Homer told him about:

**HERBERT:** So, Lisa, are you the little hell-raiser your father told me about?

هاني: آه، بيسة، انت بقى البلوة المِسِيحَة اللي ببالي حكالي عنها؟

**HERBERT:** So, Bisa, are you the big-trouble maker your father told me about?

As we can see, hell-raiser was replaced by 'البلوة المِسِيحَة' or 'big trouble maker' which is a good vernacular Egyptian equivalent for hell-raiser. However, the adjective 'المِسِيحَة' is not popular outside Egypt, although the word 'البلوة' or 'trouble' is used daily by all Arabs. The translator added the word 'المِسِيحَة' to compensate for the humour that lies in the colloquial expression 'hell-raiser' and which the word 'البلوة' alone does not compensate. This does not mean that the word 'المِسِيحَة' is the only option achieve. There are other words that are understood by a wider audience and which can still be funny.

In another example taken from 'Homer Defined', Bart uses the informal verb 'shaft' to describe his disappointment with his best friend Milhouse who did not invite him to his birthday party:

**BART:** (Complaining to Otto) My best friend shafted me. I'll never get over this Otto-man.

بدر: أعز صحابي طنشني. طلع نص كم يا توتو.

**BART:** My best friend ignored me. He turned out to be dishonest, Otto-man.

As the word 'طنشني' or 'ignored me' is not as strong as 'shafted me', the translator sacrificed the second half of the original utterance to add the purely Egyptian colloquial adjective 'نص كم' 'dishonest', or literally 'half-sleeved', which means that someone is 'incomplete' in terms of honesty or far away from it. So, another extra word was added to the main one 'طنشني' in order to retain the same influence that the situation has on Bart and which he expresses by using the verb 'shaft'. Again, it has to be stressed that this is a purely Egyptian term that is only used by Egyptians.

The following example is taken from 'Dead Putting Society'. Following a lost bet on who will win in the baseball match Bart or Todd, Homer and Ned are cutting the grass of their gardens wearing their wives' dresses. While Ned chuckles as the situation reminds him of the stunts at his college days, Homer feels humiliated:

**HOMER:** (Furiously) Oh, my God; he's enjoying it.

شافعي: تعرف يا عمر، إحساس عجيب أوي، بس ما يفرأش، بيفكرني بأيام معسكرات الجمعيات الخيرية.  
عمر: دَنَا هاتننط، دا مبسوط ومزأطط.

**NED:** You know Homer, a strange feeling, indeed. But it does not matter. It reminds me of the days of charity organizations' camps<sup>33</sup>.

**HOMER:** I'm going to have a heart attack and yet he is delighted and overjoyed.

So, 'Oh, my God; he's enjoying it' is replaced by 'I'm going to have a heart attack. He's delighted and overjoyed'. The translator replaced 'Oh, my God' with 'I'll have a heart attack' and 'He's enjoying it' with 'He's delighted and overjoyed'. 'Oh, my God' is not translated, and this could be overlooked. But the addition of 'هاتننط' 'I'll have a heart attack' and 'مزأطط' 'overjoyed' seems redundant and too colloquial as the two expressions do not ring a bell outside Egypt. In this case, 'Oh, my God' could have been replaced by the Egyptian 'What's this!' or 'أيه دا!' and 'He's enjoying it' with 'He's too delighted' or 'دا مبسوط أوي', both of which are understandable to the Arabic-speaking audiences and still able to retain the humour of the ST.

Another example where the translator adds to the ST in order to retain its humour is taken from 'Krusty Gets Busted'. Krusty, the clown is accused of robbing a shop, so his reputation is ruined. People decide to burn the dolls and games that they bought from him. Homer does the same but Bart, who is a fan of Krusty, tries to convince his father not to do so as he thinks that Krusty is innocent. Homer replies:

**HOMER:** (To Bart) Now, come on son, get with the winning team.

عمر: يا لله يا بدر، إركب الموجة و ما تعاندش.

**HOMER:** Come on Bart, get with the winning team and do not be stubborn.

'Do not be stubborn' or 'ما تعاندش' is added to the original sentence. But what attracts the attention is the translation of 'Get with the winning team' which is 'إركب الموجة'.

<sup>33</sup> The translator translated "fertility days" in the original text as "charity organizations' camps". Probably, Ned meant the days when he was younger and he had more energy than now. It is also possible that the expression could also have a sexual implication and therefore the translator decided to euphemise it. But in fact it is not clear why he decided to translate it as such. The researcher tried to contact the translator to ask him but he did not respond.



This colloquial Egyptian expression literally means ‘to ride the wave’. Although the term is becoming more popular outside Egypt day by day, it is still not very common.

The above examples show how the translator tried to compensate for the source text humour by adding more colloquial expressions. In the following examples, we will see how the translator changes the register of the characters by replacing the formal with the informal for the sake of humour. It is undeniable that Egyptian has many expressions which convey a sense of humour and which reflect the nature of people; but despite the fact that Egyptian Arabic is inventive in this regard, many of these expressions are not understood by non-Egyptians. In the following example from ‘Black Widower’, Homer finds that his shirts which he goes to work in and which Marge has washed have turned from white to pink because Bart put his red cap with them in the washing machine:

**HOMER:** (To Marge) Oh, give me, give me, give me. Oh, no, pink, pink, pink. It is all over Marge. It is all over. No...

عمر: هاتي، هاتي، هاتي. أوه... مستحيل. بامبي، بامبي، بامبي. رحت بلاش يا منى. رحت في كازوزة.

**HOMER:** Give, give me, give me. Oh, impossible, pink, pink, pink. I’m doomed Marge. I’m finished.

Once again, the two Egyptian expressions that replace ‘It’s all over’ are colloquial and metaphorical so that translating them literally back into English would be pointless as they do not make sense. For example, ‘رحت بلاش’ literally means ‘I went for free’. The second option is ‘رحت في كازوزة’ which literally means ‘I went for for a bottle of coke’. Both simply mean ‘I’m finished’, but this is Egyptian: funny and creative.

In ‘Homer Alone’, Homer looks after Maggie while Marge is away but she goes missing. Chief Wiggum finds her and brings her back. Homer gets excited when he sees her, but Chief Wiggum tells him not to feel happy as he intends to sue him for negligence:

**CHIEF WIGGUM:** (To Homer) Not so fast. You’re wanted on three counts of criminal neglect.

الشرطي: استنى، النقل ورا. انت مطلوب للتحقيق في قضية إهمال.

**CHIEF WIGGUM:** (To Homer) Wait, still more to come. You're wanted on criminal neglect.

The expression 'still more to come' or 'الثقل وراء' is an addition here which literally means 'the weight is behind' and which is added by the translator to make the situation funnier. This is because Chief Wiggum's 'Not so fast' is not compensated by 'Wait' alone; thus the addition was necessary. However, it will take some time for the non-Egyptian to interpret it. The translator could have replaced the original 'Not so fast' with a more understandable expression such as 'Do not be very happy' or 'ما تفرحش أوي'.

In another example from 'Dead Putting Society', Homer is training Bart to be ready for the Baseball competition with the Flanders. He is teaching him how to hit the ball to get it into the hole:

**HOMER:** Keep your head down, follow through...OK. That did not work.

عمر: خلي راسك تحت، تابع الكرة... ماشي، طلعت فشذك.

**HOMER:** Keep your head down, follow the ball... OK. It did not work.

Actually, the word 'فشذك' 'did not work' is used to indicate that something is 'nothing', a term that is not familiar to the Arabic-speaking audiences at all.

Finally, Bart's register is a mix of formal and informal English depending on the situation. In the following dialogue taken from 'Moaning Lisa', Bart uses the American informal verb 'scoff' which means to eat a lot of something quickly. To compensate for this vernacular American word in order to retain the humour, the translator added the word 'زلط' which is supposed to be colloquial. The word is yet formal and means to swallow food without chewing. The word is not familiar and is rarely used, even in MSA, although phonetically speaking it sounds funny, which is why the translator chose it. Moreover, 'دشليون' 'a lot' which replaces 'enough' is also unknown outside Egypt:

**MARGE:** I'm sorry everybody but I've only got two cupcakes for the three of you.

**BART:** Well Mom, one of us has scoffed more than enough cupcakes over the past three decades to keep his...

منى: أنا آسفة أوي، ما عنديش غير كيكتين وانتو ثلاثة.  
بدر: ما يجراش، ما هو فيه واحد فينا زلط دِشليون كيكَة طول الثلاثين سنة اللي فانت ومش محتاج انو...

**MARGE:** I'm very sorry, I've only got two cupcakes and you are three.

**BART:** It's OK. One of us has swallowed a lot of cupcakes over the past thirty years and does not need...

Had the translator replaced the word 'زلط' with 'علف' which means 'to feed the animals', and 'دِشليون' with 'مليون' 'million', the sentence would have been funnier since the words are more familiar to the Arabic-speaking audiences, and 'علف' is also used by Lisa in the same episode.

We have seen how the translator tried to compensate the humour through his manipulation of the vernacular Egyptian, changing the registers and tones of the characters when he needed to do so. Generally speaking, he has tried to tone up humour by adding extra colloquial vocabulary and expressions or by transferring the formal into the informal. Ferrari (2006: 130) argued that the Italian adaptation of *The Nanny* (Drescher and Jacobson, 1993) drastically changed the original US stereotypes and re-constructed the ethnic and linguistic elements in a new 'all-Italian' manner, modifying culturally specific situations into a new set of national jokes and ironies. However, the above examples from *The Simpsons* show that the translator used vocabulary and expressions that were too Egyptian in the sense that they were difficult to understand by other Arabs. He did this excessively in all dubbed episodes. The aim was obviously to try to have a humorous show in an Arabic equivalent to that of an American. In order to ascertain audiences' response, it was thought to conduct a questionnaire to examine the extent to which the approach was successful and whether it contributed to the failure of the dubbed cartoon series or not.

## 5.2.4 *The Simpsons: Questionnaire*

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### 5.2.4.1 *Rationale*

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The idea of the questionnaire emerged when it was not possible to do an experiment. It was not possible to suggest a certain translation, as was done in subtitling, and then dub it. So, an alternative had to be found which could help to

investigate if dialects can successfully be used in dubbing without creating barriers. In other words, the questionnaire aimed at a) trying to examine the extent to which a certain language variety can be a barrier in dubbing, and therefore; b) discovering if Egyptian was the reason for the failure of the cartoon series or not; and c) finding out if the translation approach which the translator followed was helpful in delivering the source text's message to the Arabic-speaking audiences.

El-Rashidi (2005) claims that the failure of the dubbed series is in fact cultural despite all efforts to adapt the scripts to make the show more accessible and acceptable to the Arabic-speaking audiences. Homer's beer, for example, is soda and his hot dogs are barbecued Egyptian beef sausages to fit in a Muslim culture. Moreover, El-Rashidi summarizes what people, mainly bloggers in chat rooms, said about the cartoons: "They've ruined it! Oh, yes they have, sob...Why?" (Noor from Oman); "It was just painful. ...The guy who played Homer Simpson was one of the most unfunny people I ever watched. Just drop the project, and air reruns of Tony Danza's show instead" (Prof. As'ad AbuKhalil, California State University, Stanislaus); "Hi-diddly-ho, neighbors! How the h -- are they going to translate that?" (Blogger's name not mentioned); "I am sure the effort (of) the people who made this show to translate it to Arabic could have made a good original show about an Egyptian family living in Egypt, dealing with religion, life and work and trying to keep a family together. That way they can proudly say Made in Egypt, instead of Made in USA, Assembled in Egypt" (Niqab).

Similarly, Al Jean, the executive producer for *The Simpsons* argues that "If he (Homer) does not drink and eat bacon and generally act as a pig, which I know is also against Islam, then I don't think it's Homer" (ABCNews, 2005). Moreover, a report that was broadcast on BBC4 about the dubbed series seems to prove what Al Jean maintains. We quote at length what the report said about the issue:

An Arabic version of the cult cartoon *The Simpsons* is receiving a mixed reaction in the Middle East. *Al-Shamshoon*, as it's been renamed, has been launched in the Arab world with a local twist. It uses the original Simpsons' animation with the voices dubbed into Arabic by popular Egyptian actors. Bear and bacon have been replaced by soda and Egyptian beef sausages. But local fans complain that much of the humour has been lost in the translation. (BBC4, 2005)

Be it culture as argued above or language as suggested, the questionnaire intended to explore which of the two is the reason for the failure of the animations. The reason(s) for choosing *The Simpsons* early series, is because 1) it is mainly dubbed into Egyptian; 2) the Sudanese dialect is also used, though partially; and 3) because the humour in it relies to a great extent on the use of language such as formal vs. vernacular. Therefore, the ability of a dialect such as Egyptian to retain the humour of the original dialogue was also put to the test. It is worth reminding the reader that, in reply to one of the questions, the professionals interviewed all agreed that dialect is better than MSA for reflecting the humour of the original.

#### 5.2.4.2 Audience and data

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Since the early series of *The Simpsons* were directed at children and teenagers, the target audience of this questionnaire were school students who were below 18 years old. For the best results, only those children over 10 were included in the questionnaire, as students at this age are more able to understand other dialects than those who are younger. To target a wide-ranging audience, 200 participants from different Arab countries, except Egypt, who were studying at different Arabic schools<sup>34</sup> in the UK were requested to participate. The participants were asked to respond to the following nine Egyptian sentences or expressions which were taken from 'Treehouse of Horror', season two (7F04), which was aired in 1990. They were also requested to write under each expression what they understood from that expression whether in MSA, in their spoken dialect or even in English. The expressions were read aloud to them and they were told that this was not a test but simply a questionnaire.

It should be mentioned that the reason for choosing the following expressions from one episode rather than from different ones was that if different expressions from different episodes had been selected, it could be argued that the researcher had chosen the most difficult terms from a variety of episodes where there was a significant likelihood of occasionally finding such a culture-specific term. Table 5.1 shows the results and table 5.2 details the nine expressions.

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<sup>34</sup> Arabic schools in the UK usually open at weekends. The most popular schools are the Saudi, Libyan and Egyptian ones that accept students from different Arab countries. The Saudi schools in Durham and Newcastle were chosen to conduct this questionnaire.

#### 5.2.4.3 Results and discussion

As we saw from the examples in the previous section and as Table 5.2 shows, the translator opted for everyday spoken Egyptian which is rich in specific words and metaphorical expressions. Consequently, Egyptian can be said to have a unique and modernised colloquial lexicon different from that of other Arabic varieties; a lexicon that mixes MSA, colloquial and English vocabulary in order to create something new that sometimes does not make sense when translated literally. For instance, in example (7) the word 'يفرش', which means 'to spread' or 'to cover' and which is usually used for furniture, is used here to indicate that someone is 'spreading' information as an introduction to his topic. Moreover, in (8) the word 'إشطه' or 'cream' means here that something is nice or spot on, and the word 'مان' 'man' is English and is commonly used in Egypt together with many other English words. Similarly, words such as 'مكلكين' 'stubborn' or 'complicated' and 'الشيش' or 'blinds', have no roots in Arabic and are not used in other Arabic varieties. Therefore, these were the results:

**Table 5.1: Results of questionnaire**

Expressions	No.1	No.2	No.3	No.4	No.5	No.6	No.7	No.8	No.9	Total
Participants who understood them	19	1	55	31	0	12	10	29	8	147
Participants who could not understand them	181	199	145	187	200	188	190	171	192	1653

**Table 5.2: The sentences used in the questionnaire**

Source text	Target text	Back translation
1- <b>MARGE:</b> What on earth was that? <b>HOMER:</b> Probably the house was settling.	1 - الزوجة: أیه الصوت الغريب دا؟ الزوج: يمكن الخشب بيریح.	1- <b>MARGE:</b> What's that strange voice? <b>HOMER:</b> May be the wood is cracking.
2- That last story was just a warm-up.	2 - الحكاية دي كانت مسح زور.	2- This story was dead easy.
3- Cool man!	3 - إشطه يا مان.	3- That's nice, man!
4- Mother! Pork chops.	4 - ريش ضاني عالفحم!	4- Barbecued lamp breast.
5- For a superior race, they really rub it in.	5 - طلعوا مكلکعين عالآخر.	5- They are very complicated.
6- While I nodded nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping.	6 - دا يا دوب أغمض وفأر.	6- I was nearly napping.
7- <b>LISA:</b> Bart, he's establishing mood.	7 - لسه بيفرش للموضوع.	7- He is introducing the topic.
8- <b>HOMER:</b> I guess I'll have no trouble getting to sleep tonight.	8 - شكلي هنام النهار دا زي الفسيخة.	8- I'll be sleeping like a dead animal.
9- Surely that is something my window lattice.	9 - دا صوت ورا الشيش و الإزاز.	9- This voice is coming from outside the blinds and the window.

Had the researcher been stricter in selecting exact interpretations for the expressions, the number of those who understood the expressions would have dropped further. In fact, it was not surprising that only 147 interpretations out of a possible 1800 responses from the 200 students were correct or close to correct. This result was brought about by the translators' use of the vocabulary and expressions that were too colloquial and rarely had a common root in MSA, the reference point for all Arabic varieties. As has already been mentioned, words such as *مكلعين، الشيش، مان* 'stubborn', 'blinds', 'man' have no roots in Arabic. Moreover, the roots of words such as *إشطه* *بيفرش* *مسح زور* which mean in Egyptian 'introducing a topic', 'very easy', 'cool' are Arabic but they are not used in their normal MSA sense where they usually mean 'spreading' or 'covering', 'easy swallow', and 'cream'. In other words, Egyptian makes use of words to create new vivid expressions that are unique and characteristic of the Egyptian variety.

But uniqueness does not mean popularity. Since the aim of the dubbed cartoon series was to target as wide an audience as possible, the translator should have taken into consideration the non-Egyptian viewers who, although Egyptian Arabic might be familiar to them, are likely to find such vernacular expressions difficult to understand. The translator's strategy to compensate humour by seeking equivalent colloquial and humorous expressions made him forget that his audience needed simpler and more understandable Egyptian Arabic. It seems that humour was the first priority for the translator rather than the audience who seem to come second on the list of priorities.

That these nine expressions were not fully understood by many participants was only the tip of the iceberg. In other words, these are only nine expressions taken from one of 29 dubbed episodes. The participants found a large gap between their spoken dialect, or even MSA, and Egyptian. One of the participants (a 16 years old Saudi student) wrote on the questionnaire sheet: "If the expressions were in Arabic, we could have been of much help to you." Other participants wrote: "Sorry! I do not understand anything." Some others interpreted *مكلعين* 'complicated' as 'drunk', 'drug addicts', 'impolite', 'stupid', and 'mad' and so on. The majority left the sheet empty.

This brings us back to the functional approach discussed in chapter 3. In the case of *The Simpsons*, skopos theory, unlike the equivalence approach adopted by the translator, avoids the trap of looking for equivalence. It concentrates rather on the spirit of the source text's message while at the same time taking into account the



skopos or the functions that the translation aims at. This twist from the text to the audience in such a context (Arab culture) is in fact crucial to the success of a translation as was explained in the case of *London to Brighton* and *Friends*. The skopos shows the essential priority is to use Egyptian Arabic to deliver the source text's message to an audience that has, given their age group, little knowledge of this language variety. This will eventually mean using vocabulary that is closest to standard or at least as simple and direct as possible. The second skopos should then be to entertain and amuse the audience using this lexicon.

Perhaps, sounding too Egyptian in order to elicit laughter equals that of the source text was a basic reason for the failure of *The Simpsons* which MBC has since stopped dubbing. It seems that, the translator thought that by doing so, he would preserve the humour of the original text since Egyptian is able to successfully replace vernacular English and still be polite. However, MBC was thinking to target the wider Arab world not just Egypt. Table 5.2 suggests that the failure of *The Simpsons* is largely linguistic rather than cultural as El-Rashidi (2005) claims, despite a culture's ability to change the source text's message as was discussed by Barbe (1996: 216) and Maluf (2005) in section 2.5.

#### 5.2.4.4 Conclusion

Cultural differences have always existed in audiovisuals before and after *The Simpsons* and have been successfully adapted to fit into a conservative ethos. However, the issue seems to be different here as different understandings of words seem to have been a contributory factor in the viewers' failure to appreciate the expressions used. This reminds us of what *The Independent*, as cited in Jackel (2001: 227), wrote about the subtitles of the French film *La Haine* which it described as being too American to the degree "that the authenticity of the dialogue was almost entirely lost". Therefore, the linguistic or dialectal barrier, if we can call it so, makes dialects in dubbing as a solution to some obstacles of subtitling risky or not recommended, especially if a dialect sounds too local or too colloquial. For example, in one of his articles about dubbing Turkish soap operas into Syrian, Mansour (2008) maintains that there are some specifically local Syrian expressions that do not go hand-in-hand with the Turkish social setting in the show. In other words, if a dialect is misused in dubbing, there is a likelihood that this dialect will fail to deliver

its message. Indeed, the misuse of a dialect usually has to do with the translation approach which the translator decides to adopt. In this case, it seems that the equivalence approach which the translator adopted did not help much.

To conclude, if Egyptian Arabic, the most popular dialect in the Arab world cannot be understood by such an audience, regardless of the reason(s), then there is little chance that other Arabic varieties could be used for dubbing. It was claimed that culture rather than Egyptian dialect could have been responsible for the viewers' failure to pick up on the humour of the screenings. It was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that dubbing these animations did not start until care had been taken to make sure that the scripts had been adapted to suit Arab culture and that the gaps had been bridged. Moreover, if culture is to blame, then why did various foreign cartoons and animations that were dubbed into MSA enjoy success? Some of them have been broadcast again and again for years. In this light, the belief that Arabic varieties are better able than MSA to reflect the humour of the source text has to be reconsidered or investigated further. A further attempt to investigate this hypothesis was through the experiment discussed in the following section.

## 5.3 Case study (E): *Con Air*

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### 5.3.1 Introduction

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Taking the nature of this film into consideration, one may expect a lot of strong language. Since the film was popular at its time, the Egyptians chose to dub it to reach as large an audience as possible. But one may also assume that one of the aims dubbing the film was to make it easier to censor swearing and taboo words. To check if dubbing was in fact used for this purpose, the translations of both the dubbed and subtitled versions were compared.

In brief, the number of swear words and how many had been euphemised or censored in both the dubbed and subtitled versions were counted. The result confirmed the fact that dubbing assists in toning down the quality and quantity of swearing because the audience has no idea about what was being said in the original dialogue, unlike the situation with subtitling where there is the risk of comparing between the original and subtitled dialogues. May be this is one of the

reasons which made the subtitler retain at least 110 swear and taboo words (see Appendix G). Despite the fact that the translator of *Con Air* in the dubbed version (see Appendix J) managed to omit 86 swear and taboo words out of 143, and despite the fact that the 57 euphemised ones were toned down to a great extent such the translator, for example, felt free to substitute 'f\*\*\*er' with 'ظريف' or 'nice' and 'dirty naked freaks' with 'ستات حلوات' or 'beautiful ladies', this is not an indication that dubbing is preferred to subtitling as we will see in the following sections.

The main aim of this case study is to see how the Arabic-speaking audiences (mainly adults) interact with a film that is dubbed into a popular dialect such as Egyptian. In other words, the ability of Arabic dialects to replace a source language will be examined. Also to be investigated is the ability of dubbing to hide swearing and taboo words and whether this can make any difference to the success or failure of a film such as *Con Air* which contains strong language.

### 5.3.2 Experiment (IV): *Con Air*

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Once again, this film was selected for adoption in the experiment because 1) it is one of the very few films that was both dubbed into Egyptian and subtitled into MSA and has been available on the market, and because 2) it also uses the Sudanese dialect to reflect the black American English spoken by the lady who works at Carson city airport. Like the other experiments, 10 participants were asked to watch the film both in its dubbed and subtitled versions and then to judge which of the two versions they found more interesting and say why. As mentioned in chapter 2, the participants were of different ages and came from different educational and geographical backgrounds. This helped target a wider audience, and thus seek objective and valid results.

#### 5.3.2.1 Description of experiment

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The 10 participants who took part in the experiment were shown the subtitled film first and after a break of 15 minutes, they were shown the dubbed version. But before that, they were told that they were going to watch both copies and then judge which one they found more interesting. While they were watching, participants were observed and notes on their reactions were taken down, especially during showing

the dubbed copy. Then each participant was asked individually for his opinion so that no one else heard what he said. This was done in order for the participants not to be affected by each other's viewpoints.

### **5.3.2.2 Results and discussion**

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The participants who came from different Arab countries and who had different educational backgrounds responded differently to the two versions. For example, two of them laughed occasionally when they were shown the dubbed version while they did not do so with the subtitled one. When they were asked about which version they favoured and why they were laughing, their answers were similar. Eyad, 32, from Palestine and a holder of a PhD in computer science, found the dubbed version more interesting than the subtitled one because "The dubbed version was funny and entertaining. The use of the Egyptian dialogue made the film more touching and interactive. The dubbed voices suited the characters of the film." Similarly, Mohammed, 22 from Libya, who was doing a course in English, also found the dubbed version better than the subtitled one because "The Egyptian version was funnier. I liked it because it made me laugh. But of course the subtitled version retained the message of the film better in the sense that it sounded more real as you can hear the original voices of the characters". This reminds us of what Manşour (2008) argued above with regard to the use of expressions that are very local in dubbing and which create a humour that is irrelevant to the plot and situation.

The rest of the observers were in favour of the subtitled version, although their reading skills were not excellent. They found it more realistic and, as a result, more interesting, despite the fact that the dubbed one was easier to understand. For example, Khalid, 40, from Sudan, argued that "The English version was more interesting and enjoyable because it was more realistic, whereas the dubbed one sounded funny, something that did not help deliver the message of the film". Moreover, Salah, 27, from Libya who was doing an elementary course in English, maintained that "Although the dubbed version helped me in understanding the film, it did not sound real." Similarly, Basim, 33, from Jordan, found the subtitled version better since the dubbed one "distorted the film". Furthermore, Mohammed Abdullah, 24, from Saudi Arabia, argued that he preferred the subtitled version simply because it was more authentic as one could listen to the original dialogue and see the

subtitles. This, in his opinion, made the subtitler more careful not to diverge from the original dialogue; whereas in the dubbed version the translator had more freedom and probably changed the original text as s/he wished. Finally, Fuad, 20, from Lebanon, argued that the English version of the film was more exciting. The quality of sound production in the Arabic dubbed version was poor and the voices themselves did not reflect the characters' feelings and passion. This brings us back to the technical obstacles of dubbing such as the cultural and aesthetic ones including character synchrony mentioned at the beginning of this chapter.

It can be noticed that those who preferred the dubbed version did so because they like humour regardless of whether it is related to the message of the film or not, as long as they laugh. One reason for their laughter could be attributed to the fact that as Reid argues (1978: 428): dubbing a film ignores the existence of the non-verbal components of a language and that is why dubbed films are sometimes very funny to a person who is aware of them. Although the film shows humour every now and then, it cannot be classified as a comedy since there is constant violence through. This is another reason why the other eight participants did not prefer the dubbed version, as they did not find in it what they expected: an action film that would keep them entertained throughout the 110 minutes.

These results show that character synchrony was a factor that influenced the participants' choices. Even if MSA was used to dub the film, this would not guarantee that it would be successful, although this needs to be investigated. This confirms what Fodor (1976), Dries (1995), and Meyer-Dinkgräfe (2006) stress with regard to the importance of character synchrony and its contribution to the success and failure of a dubbed film as we saw in the literature review. Therefore, the suggestion that dubbing can be a solution to some of the obstacles in subtitling such as the transfer of English-language dialects into written Arabic on this experiment has proved not to be viable. Moreover, what can also be learned from the experiment is the fact that dubbing can indeed be more efficient than subtitling in terms of euphemising and censoring swear words and taboos. But this is still not significant for the success or failure of dubbed audiovisuals that contain strong language, unless we are talking about cartoons. One can also notice that none of the participants mentioned anything about censorship or swearing which means that this issue did not affect their opinion, even though the dubbed version had been rendered anodyne.

## 5.4 Conclusion

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Taking into consideration the obstacles to subtitling that have been discussed and examined in the previous chapter, this chapter looked into the possibility of using dubbing as an alternative and effective language transfer method to deliver the message of the original text. Although the idea seems to be feasible in theory, it does not seem to be so in practice. Both the questionnaire and the experiment showed that dubbing into colloquial distorted rather than preserved the message. It goes without saying that dubbing into MSA remains more commercially viable than dubbing into colloquial, especially when it comes to cartoons, since using MSA reaches a larger audience. But again, this needs to be investigated.

This does not mean, however, that dubbing does not have any advantages; it is, for example, able to hide taboo and swear words that may offend the audience, such as the case with *Con Air*, and to adapt the plot of the film to suit the target culture, as was the case with *The Simpsons*. It can also be helpful in using different dialects to reflect the dialects of the source text as is the case with the two studies above where Sudanese was used to replace Indian English and Black English. These are some of the reasons for choosing dubbing over subtitling, although the issue of faithfulness to the source text may still be questioned in this case. After all, taking the risk to dub into a dialect for whatever reason does not seem to make business sense, even when it is done for children. Moreover, in the case of dubbing into a dialect for cartoons, careful consideration should be taken regarding the approach which the translator should adopt to deliver the message to his audience. Simple language is necessary so that it can be understood by all Arab children.

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## *Chapter 6*

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### **CONCLUSION**

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#### **6.1 Introduction**

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The methodology facilitated access to understanding the perceptions of participants of audiovisual translation into Arabic. The qualitative research methods enabled the audience to play an important role in reaching the findings through revealing their thoughts and ideas. The case studies which were conducted and analysed allowed us to put forward some objective answers to the five main questions.

#### **6.2 Findings: summary and discussion**

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The findings are related to the participants' reactions to Experiments I (Research Question 2), II (Research Questions 1 and 3), III (Research Questions 1 and 4), IV (Research Questions 2 and 5), and to the questionnaire (Research Question 5).

##### **6.2.1 Rendering ST dialects into the TT**

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Since colloquial Arabic tends not to be used in subtitling English-language audiovisuals into Arabic, the translation of source language dialects into Standard Arabic inevitably has an effect on the transmission of the source audiovisuals. The investigation thus centred on how to make up for this loss. Despite the fact that all companies agreed that subtitling dialects of an English-language audiovisuals into MSA is not bound to change or affect its message, even if these dialects are crucial

to the understanding of this message, there was a need to know what the audience thought in this regard. Thus the idea of carrying out Experiment I emerged.

The participants who took part in the experiment acknowledged how significant it was for them to perceive the role of the different dialects that shaped the message of the film. For some, this realisation was sparked by the introduction (as seen in 4.3.6.1) that they saw at the beginning of the film when they watched it for the second time. They only felt that there was something missing when they read this introduction about the English working and middle classes' distinctive dialects. They realised that the first translation by no means raised their awareness about the issue of social class, which is a unique feature of English society and of the film in particular. This proved to the interviewees that the failure to interpret the dialects of the source film into the target language meant that, for them, the film failed to deliver its meaning.

The importance of this limitation stems from the fact that the companies which subtitle and dub English-language audiovisuals into Arabic were unable to resolve this particular matter, and, as a result, deprived the audience of their hope to be entertained by a film which they paid for or spent their time watching. The finding also indicates that there is a need to investigate this translation problem further in order to find an alternative solution. Moreover, what also adds to the importance of the findings is the fact that the solution suggested is simple, costless, and practical. As a matter of fact, it provides the audience with the basic information that they need to understand the moral lesson of a film. When a dialect becomes the sign post for someone's social class or background, it becomes necessary to tell the audience of the different culture that other cultures have their own, and often internally differing, standards and norms.

### **6.2.2 Censorship and the message of the source film**

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The experiment showed the influence of cultures and ideologies on the message of the subtitled film, revealed the extent of omissions and euphemisms, and the fact that the audience was unhappy with 'exaggerated' censorship that diminishes the film's tone and rhythm, and proved that the claim that censorship tends not to affect the message of audiovisuals needs to be reconsidered.



These findings can help professionals improve the quality of subtitling by reducing the number of omitted swear words and by toning up some of the already euphemised words. Translating a sentence such as ‘Get the f\*\*\* off me’ as ‘Get off me’, or to interpret ‘I’m screwed’ as ‘I’m upset’ in a situation when events in the film are reaching a peak, does not in fact have the same effect on the target audience as it has on the source one. Euphemism can be exploited to the full in order for the subtitles to be deemed logical and expressive of what is taking place on the screen. While euphemism respects the audience, omission does affect the message of audiovisuals.

### 6.2.3 Subtitling humour into Arabic

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This section aimed at finding out if humour is retained when subtitled into MSA. The data which were analyzed, the interviews that were conducted as well as the experiments helped in reaching some critical conclusions in this regard. The analysis of the 66 episodes from seasons 8, 9, and 10 of the famous sitcom *Friends* gave an idea about the approaches that the subtitlers use in order to subtitle such series. The fact that they are faithful to the text rather than to the spirit of the text shows that humour has no priority over the text. This could be due to different reasons such as the fact that fidelity is the number one priority for the translator (taking into consideration euphemising offensive words) because s/he believes in it, or s/he is asked to do it, or s/he fears comparison between the source and target texts on the part of the audience, or because s/he cannot find equivalent jokes in the target culture. Furthermore, the analysed episodes revealed that there were omissions and euphemisms of taboo and swear words, something which can only add insult to injury as many jokes are sexually oriented.

Moreover, the interviewees from the professional world raised this point claiming that culture is a mammoth barrier that can sweep away a joke, let alone a technical problem such as synchronization and space on screen. Yet, when they were asked if they use any approach or kind of translation theory to overcome such difficulties and to avoid literal translation, the interviewees said ‘No’. This can only remind us of what Hayek (see Appendix E) from Pro Subtitling argued in reply to a question about the subtitling of puns which are part and parcel of humour: “Puns have to do with culture. If we do not find equivalent puns, then we translate them

literally, doing our best to align them to the original. In addition, and frankly speaking, how can we find equivalents to puns when the film has to be translated in 24 hours?" This answer is enough to reveal the difficulty of subtitling humour into Arabic.

In addition, the experiments confirmed what the data analysis revealed, and what the interviewees alluded to, that is none of the participants was in favour of the original translation of the three episodes shown. Respondents rather preferred a more functional approach that paid more attention to the joke than to the text.

#### 6.2.4 Dubbing as a possible solution to the barriers of subtitling

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The fact that the dubbed version of *Con Air* was not preferred to the subtitled one (refer to section 5.3.2.2) rules out dubbing as a complete solution to interpreting source dialects. The audience preferred the subtitled version over the dubbed one because it sounded more factual and interesting as they could listen to the actors speaking their own language. Moreover, another indication of the complications of opting for the use of dialect in dubbing is confirmed by the responses to the questionnaire which revealed that the children and young adults hardly understood anything of the Egyptian expressions and thus the dubbing of *The Simpsons* was not successful.

These findings are important not only because they cast doubt on the view that dubbing is better than subtitling in transferring the message of the ST audiovisuals, but also because they show that the barriers to dubbing are as complicated as those to subtitling. They also reinforce the solution suggested in this regard. Moreover, the fact that the two participants who found the dubbed version of *Con Air* more interesting because it was funny indicates that dubbing can also help translators, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to change part of the message of the audiovisual material or to add more to it. *Con Air* is not a comedy, although it has some funny and sarcastic situations that occur every now and then. But it seems that the Egyptian dialect, together with the Sudanese, could make it so. Finally, the results of the questionnaire revealed that the dubbing of *The Simpsons* into Egyptian Arabic should encourage TV channels either to dub into MSA or request their translators to use simpler Egyptian Arabic to make the TT more accessible and understandable.

It is inarguable that dubbing can hide swearing and taboo words since the audience is unaware of the original dialogue. A comparison between the subtitled and dubbed versions of *Con Air* showed that dubbing gives more freedom to the translator to censor and euphemise words in the way s/he likes as was argued by Zitawi (1995; Athamneh and Zitawi, 1999; Zitawi, 2003), section 2.5. Although this finding cannot be considered as new, it shows how strong censorship is and how free translator or agent can be in this regard whenever they can. It should be mentioned here that if dubbing proved to be efficient in delivering a polite dialogue that suits the audience, it does not necessarily mean that this is what the audience wishes. Despite the fact that *Con Air* is full of swearing and even taboo words, not one of the participants expressed any concerns in this regard when they watched the subtitled version. Nor did anyone mention that the dubbed version had the advantage of censoring swearing even though the ten participants came from cultured backgrounds where politeness prevails. If this shows anything, it only shows that using dubbing to censor swearing and taboo words is not a necessity.

It was argued that in dubbing colloquialisms and varieties of one country could be replaced by another's, and therefore, the likelihood of eliciting laughter is higher than when MSA is used as is the case of subtitling. The data supporting this came from the interviews, an analysis of 29 episodes of *The Simpsons*, and a questionnaire. We saw how the failure of the audiences to appreciate the humour in *The Simpsons* had been due to cultural differences. However, the results of the analysis and the fact that it was not the first time that cartoons had been adapted to suit the target culture refuted this claim and indicated that the failure of the animation was due to the Egyptian dialect being unsuitable or too poor.

These results are as they seem to suggest that dialect does not necessarily appeal to audiences and make them laugh, taking into consideration that jokes are in many cases local or culture-specific. It should also be pointed out that subtitling is not a good alternative to dubbing such series for such age groups as they have not yet developed the skills to read the subtitles fast enough. This leaves dubbing as the only option. Moreover, as experience shows, MSA has never failed in animated films or cartoons. We know, for example, that the famous American comedy animation film *Ice Age*, I and II, was dubbed into Standard Arabic and was a big success. But *The Simpsons* is different in terms of the dialects used in it and its complicated social context. However, this does not mean that a dialect such as Egyptian has to be ruled

out. For a dialect to take the role of MSA in this case and be understood to all Arab children, it has to be as close to Standard Arabic as possible. In this sense, it has to be easy to understand and unsophisticated as we saw in chapter five. That is why the functional approach was suggested to replace equivalence. This is not to deny that there would be some purely Egyptian terms every now and then which could be subtitled with their definitions for the Arabic-speaking audiences.

### **6.2.5 Applying the functional approach: (skopos theory)**

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The aim of suggesting a theoretical framework for translators to work on is to help practitioners move from a purely pragmatic approach to a stage where they are able to define their objectives more systematically and be clearer about why a particular ST is going to be translated and for whom. This is hoped to lead to improved translation outputs. To simply look for an equivalent text is not practical when we take into consideration the cultural as well as the technical factors involved in the process. Therefore, a functional approach (skopos theory) may be more effective in this respect in the sense that it gives more attention to the target text and its audience (the Arabic-speaking audiences). This is crucial because it has to be taken into consideration that the dialogue of an English-language audiovisual may experience some modification (which may include omission, euphemism and rephrasing) due to the fact that it is written in the first place for an audience that has its own ideological, cultural, political and religious characteristics different from the ones which the target audience believes in. The Arab culture is less tolerant when taboos are involved.

### **6.3 Implications and recommendations**

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This research has implications for the translation methods that are used by subtitlers. Recommendations are mainly related to the subtitling and dubbing companies, to their professional translators, to theorists, and to the TV channels and production companies. More general recommendations can also be made about subtitling and dubbing and which of the two methods is preferred in the Arab world and why.

### 6.3.1 The role of the subtitling and dubbing companies

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The findings that have been presented above with regard to subtitling dialects, swearing and humour into Arabic indicate that companies pay little attention to their audiences, and as a result, to the message of the audiovisuals. They claim that they only have 24 hours to subtitle a film, for example, and that MSA as well as the limitations of the medium are all restrictions upon them. But in fact, this is not always true. The experiments in this study show that with little effort the quality of subtitling and dubbing can be enhanced. The solutions suggested for case studies A, B, C and D cannot be said to be costly in terms of money and time. So, what companies can do is conduct research about the audience's preferences, which can be realized through carrying out further experiments. For example, as far as dubbing is concerned, the relative efficiency of MSA versus Egyptian Arabic can be compared through conducting a pilot study in which a film or an episode of a sitcom or cartoon is dubbed into both colloquial and Standard Arabic and then shown to the trial audience to decide. Then the results of any research and experiment can be used to amend or substitute material judged to be unsatisfactory.

Moreover, since translators contribute significantly to the quality of subtitles as argued by Mueller (2001) and Diaz-Cintas (2005) in section 2.4, it is the duty of the companies to train their translators not only with regard to technical issues that are related the appearance of the subtitles on the screen, but also with regard to the translation approach(es) that should be used and which should also be the outcome of the research suggested above. The translators may not use a certain approach unless they are told and trained to do so. But what happens is that they are required to convey the message of audiovisuals in the fewest words possible that fit the space on screen. This general rule does not mean that translators are free to make changes to improve the effectiveness of the message as is the case in the translation of humour (refer to section 4.4.2). Nevertheless, the functional approach adopted to conduct the experiments may appeal to some companies and professionals.

Finally, companies should also consider training their translators to work together as a team. This has several advantages such as saving time and producing a better translation. High quality translation can be guaranteed through a team of qualified translators who know what best suits the target audience. In the case of

subtitling humour, it would be more efficient if strategies for compensating the humour of the source text were agreed upon by different subtitlers to decide what works and what does not. But when work is done individually, it is more likely that the translation will encounter criticism because it is made from only one point of view.

### **6.3.2 The role of professionals and theorists**

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The literature showed that there are only a few articles that were written by a professional about subtitling into Arabic and they do not deal with the issues of translating dialects, swear words and humour. Moreover, what Zitawi (1995) (2003) and Mazid (2006) wrote were articles that analysed certain subtitled films and dubbed cartoons to spot grammatical mistakes or mistranslations. They also concentrated on censorship. Only Maluf (2005) discussed dubbing into MSA versus colloquial from a theoretical point of view by interviewing some professionals in this respect. In brief, one can say that there have been around seven published articles and one Master's thesis so far since subtitling and dubbing into Arabic started decades ago.

With only this number of articles available, two of which alone are critical, one can say that the standard of audiovisual translation into Arabic may not witness a big improvement in the near future, until and unless new literature is published, especially by professionals. Furthermore, new translation models should be generated and existing ones subjected to more rigorous evaluation. When ideas or models are suggested by theorists, it is the responsibility of professionals to prove or disprove them, reflecting on their experience. Here emerges also the role of companies to encourage their staff to participate. But it has to be confessed that companies, at least those which are located in the Arab world, would rather keep their experience to themselves than offer it on a plate to others! Instead, a number of major big companies refused to be interviewed.

### **6.3.3 The role of TV channels**

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Although there is little that TV channels can do, they can contribute positively to the improvement of subtitling and dubbing. Usually they purchase highly popular audiovisuals and then commission outside companies to subtitle or dub them. They

normally give such companies guidelines with regard to the amount of censorship that should be applied and into which language variety to dub them, Standard Arabic or colloquial. Apart from this, they do not interfere in how translators interpret the message of audiovisuals. So, it appears that TV channels are the ones who are held responsible for the failure of any subtitled or dubbed material since it is they who chose it, chose whether to dub or subtitle it, and chose the language variety into which it should be dubbed. Luckily, companies escape blame, even partially, when they should not.

For MBC to choose to subtitle *The Simpsons* into Egyptian Arabic was not a mistake. The failure was to deliver that particular Egyptian dialect to a non-Egyptian audience. That is why conducting pilot studies for such programmes or audiovisuals can minimise such risks in the future. Last, in case of dubbing long series, TV channels can require companies to provide a sample of one or two episodes to conduct a market research programme on or to consult their executives in this regard.

#### 6.3.4 The role of producing companies

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Different writers such as Minchinton (1987) Zabalbeascoa (1996) James (2001) Diaz-Cintas (2001a) and Taivalkoski-Shilov (2008) highlight the importance of a good dialogue list for audiovisuals as was illustrated in section 2.4. A good dialogue list explains culture-specific references, dialects and jokes, and facilitates the translator's work. Despite its importance, it is not always produced. This will create a challenge for the translators to deal with the source text and thus affect the quality of the translation. But what is even worse is that sometimes not even a script is provided. Kaadi (see Appendix D) argues that it often happens that subtitlers do not receive a dialogue list or even a script of a film, something that makes the task more difficult and time-consuming for the translator, and therefore affects the quality of translation.

#### 6.3.5 Dubbing versus subtitling

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Section 2.6 in the literature review chapter presented the debate about dubbing versus subtitling and questioned which one of the two audiovisual language transfer

methods is better able to render the source message into the target text in a way that does not impair the aesthetics of audiovisuals. It was clear that there is a preference for subtitling over dubbing in general for financial as well as character synchrony reasons. The former concerns the companies and the latter concerns the audience. The experiment on *Con Air* confirmed that the participants preferred subtitling to dubbing. They found the subtitled version more authentic and realistic and therefore enjoyable, as illustrated in section 5.3.2.2. The result suggests subtitling is dominant, that it will remain so, and thus more attention should be concentrated on improving its quality.

## 6.4 Limitations

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There were some issues that were not explored in this study because of financial and technical constraints which limited the research to a certain extent. These limitations included carrying out more experiments and the difficulty of involving women. Other difficulties are related to the number of participants in the experiments.

There was an intention to extend the experiments further to enrich and complete the findings but this was difficult to do for a variety of reasons. For example, when the questionnaire for *The Simpsons* was done, it would have been most useful if an experiment was conducted instead by dubbing the same episode that was selected to carry out the questionnaire and showing it to the participants. As was mentioned, the idea was to use the functional approach in dubbing the episode into Egyptian Arabic. It is unfortunate that such a procedure had to remain theoretical and not tested. For financial and logistical reasons, it was impossible to implement this idea. Moreover, there would also be a need to dub *Con Air* into MSA to further investigate the reasons why the participants did not prefer the Egyptian dubbed version. If this had been done, it would have revealed if the participants rejected the dubbed version because of Egyptian Arabic or because the whole idea of dubbing is unattractive to them. Furthermore, dubbing *The Simpsons* or *Con Air* into Syrian might have also uncovered new horizons regarding dubbing into Arabic in general.

As for the participants who were involved in the experiments, they were all men. This is because asking some women to be part of a group and watch a film such as *London to Brighton* or *Con Air*, which could be regarded as offensive to



many viewers, was not easy. In addition, it would also be inappropriate for male participants to attend a film or sitcom in the presence of female participants and vice versa. Therefore, to seek more objective results, one solution could be for a group of female participants to watch the film or sitcom separately without the presence of men.

If female participants were included, not only would the types of participants vary but also the number would increase. The ten participants were the maximum number that could be persuaded to complete the experiment. For reasons of time and budget, and the fact that there were 4 experiments each of which had to be watched twice, it proved impossible to increase the number. Although ten would still give valid result, it would have been even better if this number had been twenty, for instance.

## **6.5 Directions for future research**

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It is still necessary to further explore and justify subtitling into Arabic and dubbing into MSA and Syrian dialect. Moreover, various issues that have to do with the design of the methodology need to be varied. A few of these issues are related to extending the findings of this research while others are crucial issues that have yet to be investigated. For example, there is a need to do more research to find new techniques for both subtitling humour and dubbing animated humour into MSA.

### **6.5.1 Extending the findings by varying the methods**

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This study has mainly adopted a qualitative research method through conducting interviews and experiments. The study also relied partially on the quantitative method by doing a small questionnaire. Despite the fact that conducting interviews is an effective method, it was felt that there is no guarantee that the interviewees would not try to sound perfect and shy away from giving a straightforward answer. For example, when El-Hakim (see Appendix B for interview) was asked if one can render the dialects of the source dialogue into written MSA she answered: “We do our best”. Then when the interviewee was asked how, she replied: “We find a way to do so”. Added to this is the fact that there were major companies in the Arab countries that did not cooperate in this regard, such as Anis Ebeid in Egypt. So, it was impossible

to know how they dealt with the issues that needed to be investigated. Therefore, the methods should be totally audience-oriented rather than waste time and money contacting audiovisual translation companies and travelling to them. This can be done by carrying out more questionnaires, asking the audience about their opinion with regard to the quality of subtitling and dubbing and how they would like it to be, especially when it comes to humour, dubbing into Standard Arabic vs dialects, and swear words.

### 6.5.2 Exploring new techniques for subtitling humour

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We saw in *Friends* how humour relies to a large extent on cultural references that relate to names of celebrities, TV programmes, films, soap operas, and cartoons, many of which are unknown to the Arabic-speaking audiences. As a result, the strategy in this study was to illustrate such references whenever possible rather than to translate them literally (refer to section 4.4.3.4). But one thing which is still worth investigating is putting celebrities' photos at a corner of the screen for the audience to be able to link between the joke and the reference. For example, when Chandler compares his wife's hair to Diana Ross's (refer to sample 19, section 4.4.3.4), a photo of the famous artist could be put in a corner to enable the audience know why Chandler mentioned this celebrity in particular. This might be a more efficient method than for instance explaining who Diana Ross is, which might not be possible given space and time limitations on screen. Add to this is the fact that such a solution can be applied only to celebrities.

### 6.5.3 Further exploration of dubbing animated humour into Arabic

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This type of audiovisual comedy is now as popular as ever due to some blockbuster series such as *The Simpsons* which constitute a challenge to subtitling and dubbing companies. The challenge lies in the language into which such humour is dubbed. MSA is probably too formal to express the colloquialisms of the series, although, it must be admitted, it has never been tried; and Egyptian Arabic failed for the reasons we mentioned in section 5.2.4. So, what needs to be explored here are three issues. First, it should be tested if MSA works in dubbing this kind of animation. MSA has been successful in dubbing many cartoons and animations for children and young

adults. Second, a 'mild' Egyptian dialect that is not too colloquial might work. Indeed, there is no reason why it should not, unless the audiences prefer MSA. Third, Syrian might be an alternative option due to the fact that it has a high acceptance level and is now more popular than Egyptian. These three experiments can be done and compared, although costs could be a barrier unless the research is funded by some academic or professional institution.

## 6.6 Conclusion

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This thesis has investigated ways in which key technical features of audiovisual translation combine with the particular expectations and constraints characteristic of Arabic-speaking target cultures to generate widespread translation loss across a range of audiovisual products. Using both producer-focused and audience-focused research methods, underpinned by an appropriate framework of translation theory, the study demonstrates how the quality of subtitling and dubbing into Arabic could be improved through suggesting simple techniques that incur little cost in terms of time and money. Companies need to set clear translation guidelines that direct their translators' work, and to train them to use them efficiently when dealing with humour, dialects and swearing. The framework for these guidelines should be informed by a theoretical model which takes into consideration the full range of technical, cultural and linguistic factors involved in this type of translation. A more functional approach is therefore required to bridge the cultural and linguistic gaps within certain technical and linguistic conditions and yet reach large audiences, enhancing translation quality and engaging in a more sophisticated way with the expectations and responses of target audiences. While the findings of the present study constitute a sound basis for the kind of training that needs to be offered by employers, further research will be required in order to develop a more complete understanding of the application of these principles to other audiovisual genres and different parts of the Arabic-speaking world.

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*Godfather, The*. Dir. Francis F. Coppola. Prod. Alfran Productions. Cinema International Corporation, 1972.

*Golden Girls, The*. By Susan Harris. Prod. Touchstone Television. NBC Productions, 1985.

*Good Will Hunting*. Dir. Gus V. Sant. Prod. Be Gentleman Limited Partnership. Marimax, 1997.

*Grace under Fire*. By Chuck Lorre. Prod. Carsey-Werner Compny. American Broadcasting Company, 1993.

*Ice Age*. Dir. Chris Wedge. Prod. Blue Sky Studios. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2002.

*Ice Age: The Meltdown*. Dir. Carlos Saldanha. Prod. Blue Sky Studios. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2006.

*Kingdom of Heaven*. Dir. Ridley Scott. Prod. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation. Twentieth Century-Fox Film Corporation, 2005.

*La Haine*. Dir. Mathieu Kassovitz. Prod. Canal+. Atalanta Filmes, 1995.

*Lion of the Desert*. Dir. Mostafa Akkad. Prod. Filmco. Filmco, 1981.

*London to Brighton*. Dir. Paul A. Williams. Prod. Steel Mill Pictures. Ascot Elite Entertainment Group, 2006.

*Lord of the Rings, The*. Dir. Peter Jackson. Prod. New Line Cinema. New Line Cinema, 2001.

*Melrose Place*. By Darren Star. Prod. Darren Star Productions. Fox Network, 1992.

*Message, The*. Dir. Mostafa Akkad. Prod. Filmco. Filmco, 1977.

*Monty Python's Flying Circus*. By Graham Chapman, John Cleese, and Terry Gilliam. Prod. BBC. BBC, 1969.

*Moulin Rouge*. Dir. Baz Luhrman. Prod. Angel Studios. 20th Century Fox Italia, 2001.

*Nanny, The*. By Fran Drescher and Peter M. Jacobson. Prod. Columbia Broadcasting System. TriStar Television, 1993.

*Nil by Mouth*. Dir. Gary Oldman. Prod. SE8 Group. Fox Film Corporation, 1997.

*Pan's Labyrinth*. Dir. Guillermo Del Toro. Prod. Tequila Gang. Culture Publishers, 2006.

*Police Academy*. Dir. Hugh Wilson. Prod. Ladd Company, The. Argentina Video Home, 1984.

*Rock, The*. Dir. Michael Bay. Prod. Hollywood Pictures. Buena Vista Pictures, 1996.

*Sabrina, the Teenage Witch*. By Nell Scovell. Prod. Hartbreak Films. Paramount Television, 1996.

*Saved by the Bell*. By Sam Bobrick. Prod. NBC Productions. NBC Productions, 1989.

*Simpsons, The*. By Matt Groening. Prod. 20th Century Fox Television. Fox Film Corporation, 1989.

*Sophie's Choice*. Dir. Alan J. Pakula. Prod. Keith Barish Productions. CBS/Fox Video, 1982.

*Tempted*. Dir. Bill Bennett. Prod. Golden Circle International. TF1 International, 2001.

*This is England*. Dir. Shane Meadows. Prod. Big Arty Productions. A-Film Distribution, 2006.

*Trainspotting*. Dir. Dany Boyle. Prod. Channel Four Films. Channel Four Films, 1996.

*Troy*. Dir. Wolfgang Petersen. Prod. Warner Bros. Pictures. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2004.

*Valkyrie*. Dir. Bryan Singer. Prod. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. United Artists, 2008.

*Victor Victoria*. Dir. Blake Edwards. Prod. Artista Management. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, 1982.

## LIST OF APPENDICES

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### Appendix (A): Interview conducted with Ahmed Khuddro, SSS, London.

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#### - **TRANSLATION THEORY**

##### **A- Do you rely on a particular translation theory? What is it?**

I can put it this way: I translate 20% of the source text literally and the rest is the general meaning of the message. The meaning is what matters for me rather than the literal translation of the text.

##### **B- Do you agree that film translation is an adaptation rather than translation?**

No. It is not adaptation. In adaptation you can change quite well in the source text but in translation you can change very little.

#### - **DIALECTS**

##### **C- How can English dialects be subtitled into equivalent Arabic ones and is it important to do so?**

Yes, it is important to do so but it is extremely difficult. May be you can colour it a little bit to show that there is a difference if necessary.

##### **D- Since the only language used in subtitles is MSA, how does this affect the message of a film? If there is any loss in message, how can this loss be compensated?**

It all depends on the message of the film. If the dialect issue is part of the plot, then not rendering it can affect the message. The issue of compensation depends on the subtitler's reserve of vocabulary. If you have a huge reserve, then you can actually colour subtitles in such a way to show the different dialects. I have never done it before, though.

#### - **EUPHEMISM**

**E- To what extent does euphemizing swearing and taboo words tend to affect the messages of the translated films?**

It really depends on the actual message of the film itself. If the subject of the film is not affected in anyway, then it is fine to use euphemism. In any case, I do not think that the message of a film would be affected by euphemism. It is only a matter of being sensitive about certain words hoping that nobody from the children notices them. If we are, for example, translating films for children, then there is no need to translate swear words, especially if you do not want children to learn these words. Children films aim at teaching or entertaining. So, there is no need to translate swear words. Moreover, we use euphemism in the Arab world in particular because of the fact that it has got something related to the ethical and religious censorship because we do not want things that would not be ethically acceptable. Of course, if you are translating from English into German, for example, you would not need to euphemize.

Euphemism helps avoid any clash of cultures. If, on the other hand, you are watching an action film and an actor starts swearing, you as a translator would use one or two words that show that he is swearing because he is in a difficult situation. It really makes no difference if you euphemize things and give the audience an idea that the actor is swearing. I can give you an example from my experience when I worked at MBC TV (owned by a Saudi business man). They used to monitor my translation and swear words in particular. When the monitor came across a swear word such as 'son of the b\*\*\*\*', he used to put it as 'son of....' to indicate that there is a swear word. I was a bit more liberal about censorship. I have seen things that are really ridiculous. For instance, a word such as 'paradise' cannot be used because this is a religious word. Rather they would use a word such as 'garden'. Similarly, we were not allowed to use the word 'hell' in a sentence such as 'Go to hell'. Instead, we used to translate this sentence as 'Go away'. The educated audience who know English will realise these discrepancies and spot the differences between the two texts. This is not in the favour of the subtitler, but it is the censor or monitor who decides or you can say the client.

**F- Taking into consideration the fact that we are living the age of globalization, is it really important to euphemize?**

The satellite cable technology reaches all Arabic audience worldwide; an audience that is so varied and vast that you cannot actually choose not to euphemize. Again, euphemism does not affect the story. It only affects the message when swear words are used as a way of mannerism indicating different meanings. For example, the word f\*\*\*\*\* can come in different contexts and be interpreted in various ways. For instance, it could be a swear word and could also mean beautiful such as in the expression 'Oh, what a f\*\*\*\*\* house'.

- **HUMOUR**

**G- Is translated humour able to have the same effect that the original text has on the audience and how?**

The first thing which you need to ask is whether one can translate humour. I was asked once to translate *Great Moments of Humour in British Television* and I really could not actually translate more than 5% of it. I could not understand what they were trying to say. If I translate it, no one will laugh at it because it is not something that you can laugh at. Humour is a subject that is specific to a certain culture and its translation rarely succeeds unless if you use dynamic translation. Dynamic translation might work as you bring the equivalent of it.

**H- To what extent can the translator be free in order to deliver the message? In other words, which has the priority, translation or humour?**

I would say both are equally important, humour and translation. The picture assists the subtitles in getting the message through to the audience.

**I- Which can better express the humour of the TT, standard or colloquial Arabic?**

Colloquial is much closer to reality than standard. So, you dub into Egyptian, Lebanese or Syrian, for example.

**J- Depending on your experience, are puns translatable into Arabic?**

Yes. It can be translatable even if you have to use dynamic equivalent. For example, 'sea shells on the sea shore' can be translated dynamically into Arabic by finding its equivalent.

- **DUBBING**

**K- Can dubbing solve the problem of subtitling English dialects by dubbing those dialects into colloquial Arabic such as Egyptian, for example?**

Dubbing can solve the problem a bit since you can use different dialects.

**L- Taking into consideration that in dubbing the audience cannot compare between the two texts, the source and the target, can dubbing do a better job with regard to censorship?**

It definitely can. In fact, this is part of the reason why some countries prefer dubbing to subtitling.

**M- Is dubbing into colloquial Arabic better able than subtitling into MSA to successfully transfer the humour of English films?**

Here you have to do dynamic translation to get the message through which is not easy to do unless the translator is creative in this regard.

- **DIALOGUE LIST**

**N- Do you usually get a dialogue list together with the film script?**

Unfortunately, despite the importance of a dialogue list, it is not always available, something that affect the quality of translation.

- **TRANSLATION THEORY**

**A- Do you rely on a particular translation theory? What is it?**

No. We do not think that there is a need to do so.

**B- Do you agree that film translation is an adaptation rather than translation?**

Yes. It is really an adaptation rather than translation.

- **DIALECTS**

**C- How can English dialects be subtitled into equivalent Arabic ones and is it important to do so?**

We try to do our best. It is not really. The audience picks up the message throughout the film. It is very difficult to convey the differences between dialects in subtitling, in the case of Arabic. The reason being that dialects are spoken while the Arabic used in subtitling is standard Arabic, which is a written version and hence doesn't carry the differences in dialect. In general (in all languages), we discourage the use of dialects, even in dubbing, as they can seem ridiculous to the target audience and must only be used with care. We try to render whatever message the original creator wished to convey by using dialects in another way.

**D- Since the only language used in subtitles is MSA, how does this affect the message of a film? If there is any loss in message, how can this loss be compensated?**

Yes, of course, any translation – not only subtitling – is bound to lose some of the spirit of the work in the process. All endeavours to 'compensate' this loss aim at conveying the spirit or the core message as closely as possible in the localized version.

- **EUPHEMISM**

**E- To what extent does euphemizing swearing and taboo words tend to affect the messages of the translated films?**

It depends on the film or on what is being subtitled. But, in general, yes it does, because you cannot get the same mood of the original film. You lose part of the message.

**F- Taking into consideration the fact that we are living the age of globalization, is it really important to euphemize?**

You have to take into consideration that the written word is stronger than the spoken one. In addition, the culture is so influential and it has to be taken into consideration. After all, this is the wish of the client. If the client wants this then we have to do it regardless of whether this is important or not. S/he gives instructions and we stick to them. It is worth mentioning though that euphemising or censorship is less than it was 9 years ago for example.

- **HUMOUR**

**G- Is translated humour able to have the same effect that the original text has on the audience and how?**

Not much. You cannot translate the humour as it is. Each language has its own way when it comes to the sense of humour, and the message will be given in a way that people who cannot read will count mostly on the body language.

**H- To what extent can the translator be free in order to deliver the message? In other words, which has the priority, translation or humour?**

Usually, the client gives the translator a free hand to version the comedy in the best way in order to relay the essence of the jokes. On very rare occasions did we have clients who cared more about delivering a 'translation' rather than a 'message'. In my



opinion, the priority is as follows: (a) to try and marry the message/joke with the initial script i.e. try and find the closest equivalent, and if not possible, come up with a local equivalent.

**I- Which can better express the humour of the TT, standard or colloquial Arabic?**

Colloquial is more able than standard to elicit laughter for different reasons such as because it has a wider range of lexicon which the translator can choose from to render the joke of the ST.

**J- Depending on your experience, are puns translatable into Arabic?**

Mostly not. Puns represent one of the main difficulties that face subtitlers or translators.

**- DUBBING**

**K- Can dubbing solve the problem of subtitling English dialects by dubbing those dialects into colloquial Arabic such as Egyptian, for example?**

Dubbing can solve part of this problem, although I wouldn't call it a problem per se, because any attempt at reproducing a work is bound to lose some of its spirit. So, it's really just a fact. Anything other than the original version cannot match the original 100%. With this in mind, we can say that dubbing can solve part of the dialect problem. But, you have to take into consideration that a well dubbed version is much more expensive to produce than a subtitled one. Also see earlier answer about dialects in general.

**L- Taking into consideration that in dubbing the audience cannot compare between the two texts, the source and the target, can dubbing do a better job with regard to censorship?**

Yes, it can be a solution of course.

**M- Is dubbing into colloquial Arabic better able than subtitling into MSA to successfully transfer the humour of English films?**

We cannot really tell. Naturally, this is the client's choice. We have been asked by clients to dub into standard and by others into colloquial. In colloquial, Egyptian and Lebanese come out on top, as they're the dialects that are widely understood in the Arab world, thanks to the huge film and music industry present in the two countries.

- **DIALOGUE LIST**

**N- Do you usually get a dialogue list together with the film script?**

Most of the times translators work without the script or dialogue list. So, there tends to be some mistakes in translation usually related to gender where the pronoun 'you' is not clear whether it refers to a male or female. We work with professional translators and we double check the translation three times before we release the film.

- **TRANSLATION THEORY**

**A- Do you rely on a particular translation theory? What is it?**

Not really. There is no need for that.

**B- Do you agree that film translation is an adaptation rather than translation?**

Yes. Of course it is. This is because it involves euphemism, omission and condensation of text.

- **DIALECTS**

**C- How can English dialects be subtitled into equivalent Arabic ones and is it important to do so?**

They cannot be subtitled and it is not important to do so simply because the audiences follow the story and they can get the message.

**D- Since the only language used in subtitles is MSA, how does this affect the message of a film? If there is any loss in message, how can this loss be compensated?**

Not at all. This does not affect the message of the film. The audience will still understand what the film wants to say and there would be no loss in the moral lesson.

- **EUPHEMISM**

**E- To what extent does euphemizing swearing and taboo words tend to affect the messages of the translated films?**

Euphemizing doesn't affect the message; you don't change the meaning but the word in nice way that doesn't affect the meaning.

**F- Taking into consideration the fact that we are living the age of globalization, is it really important to euphemize?**

As for the GCC area (Muslim Countries) doesn't accept swearing to be translated into Arabic without euphemism. Also, any religious or political taboos should also be euphemized or deleted. For example, notice the following sentence and the way it was euphemized:

I assure you that the kings are not respectable people

- أؤكد لك ان الملوك ليسوا أشخاصاً محترمين

I assure you that kings do not fulfill their promises

- أؤكد لك انهم لا يفوا بوعودهم

- **HUMOUR**

**G- Is translated humour able to have the same effect that the original text has on the audience and how?**

Humour is difficult to translate but it is not impossible to achieve.

**H- To what extent can the translator be free in order to deliver the message? In other words, which has the priority, translation or humour?**

As in previous they will translate faithful to the text and especially they do translation following the script without watching the film.

**I- Which can better express the humour of the TT, standard or colloquial Arabic?**

Colloquial, of course. It is more realistic.

**J- Depending on your experience, are puns translatable into Arabic?**

If we can find equivalent in the target language, yes we do, but most of the time they are translated literally.

- **DUBBING**

**K- Can dubbing solve the problem of subtitling English dialects by dubbing those dialects into colloquial Arabic such as Egyptian, for example?**

Not at all, because hearing is worse than reading. Second, the majority of people knows English and knows the actors and their voices. Dubbing will not make them watch it, because it will loses Sense and effect of the film itself.

**L- Taking into consideration that in dubbing the audience cannot compare between the two texts, the source and the target, can dubbing do a better job with regard to censorship?**

It is useful for euphemism purposes, of course.

**M- Is dubbing into colloquial Arabic better able than subtitling into MSA to successfully transfer the humour of English films?**

I would not really go for dubbing films at all. Just imagine 'Adel Imam is dubbed by Sean Connery, for example. It would not be successful since each has his own charisma which cannot be dubbed.

- **DIALOGUE LIST**

**N- Do you usually get a dialogue list together with the film script?**

Most of the times translators work without the script or dialogue list. So, there tends to be some mistakes in translation usually related to gender where the pronoun 'you' is not clear whether it refers to a male or female. We work with professional translators and we double check the translation three times before we release the film.

- **TRANSLATION THEORY**

**A- Do you rely on a particular translation theory? What is it?**

No, we don't rely on a particular theory, as the standards of the TV channels are not the same, but in general, the important and the main things we take care of are the following:

- Accuracy and quality of translation.
- Trying to convey the message in lesser words as much as possible so that the viewer can read the subtitles easily.
- The subtitles remain on screen for duration of time enough to be read easily.

**B- Do you agree that film translation is an adaptation rather than translation?**

Yes, this is true, as in subtitling we don't just translate, but rather we translate, edit, change, modify, euphemize... etc..

- **DIALECTS**

**C- How can English dialects be subtitled into equivalent Arabic ones and is it important to do so?**

Yes, they can be subtitled and of course it is important. After all, they are part of the whole dialogues.

**D- Since the only language used in subtitles is MSA, how does this affect the message of a film? If there is any loss in message, how can this loss be compensated?**

Sometimes they can be translated into similar dialects (i.e. to be given the spirit of the Arabic language) and sometimes they can't. This doesn't usually affect the message, and even if it does, it won't be that important.

- **EUPHEMISM**

**E- To what extent does euphemizing swearing and taboo words tend to affect the messages of the translated films?**

Most of the cases it doesn't affect the message. This is due to the cultural differences and backgrounds between the two languages. When someone wants to convey a certain message in English (or in any other foreign language), this doesn't mean necessarily that the message is conveyed in the same manner and words literally. Another thing is that euphemism is not applied to the translation of all programs, as this is related to the censorship standards of each TV channel. For example, a channel like Showtime has a completely different standards than those of Kuwaiti TV or Saudi TV.

**F- Taking into consideration the fact that we are living the age of globalization, is it really important to euphemize?**

Sometimes it is really important to euphemize, because what is socially allowed to be broadcasted on an American or European TV channel, is not necessarily allowed in Arab TV channels. Again, the cultural differences and backgrounds are not the same. Yes, it is true that the majority of people know swear words, but still they can't be shown on TV literally. Again, this is related as well to the standards of the TV channel itself.

**- HUMOUR**

**G- Is translated humour able to have the same effect that the original text has on the audience and how?**

Generally speaking it is not able to have the same effect because of the cultural differences. What can make an American or European person laugh doesn't necessarily make an Arab person laugh. Sometimes there are some mutual or similar ideas or ways.

**H- To what extent can the translator be free in order to deliver the message? In other words, which has the priority, translation or humour?**

In fact, both are important, and both complete each other to convey the message requested and we can't separate between them.

**I- Which can better express the humour of the TT, standard or colloquial Arabic?**

The colloquial humor will be more welcome because it is usually related to the daily problems and issues that people face in their life and this is better expressed in colloquial.

**J- Depending on your experience, are puns translatable into Arabic?**

It depends on the words themselves. Sometimes, equivalents can be found and sometimes they are translated literally.

- **DUBBING**

**K- Can dubbing solve the problem of subtitling English dialects by dubbing those dialects into colloquial Arabic such as Egyptian, for example?**

Yes, in most of the cases, dubbing can solve this problem, and especially if it was done in dialects (Syrian or Egyptian).

**L- Taking into consideration that in dubbing the audience cannot compare between the two texts, the source and the target, can dubbing do a better job with regard to censorship?**

In general, yes dubbing can do better job. Technically speaking, any program can be dubbed into Arabic, but not every program can be suitable for dubbing. Dubbing, may cause the program to lose something of its spirit and attraction and sometimes can't convey the message as requested, especially in certain programs, like musical programs or certain literary programs. On the other hand, dubbing costs money and takes time more than subtitling, and not all the TV channels are willing to bear such expenses.

**M- Is dubbing into colloquial Arabic better able than subtitling into MSA to successfully transfer the humour of English films?**

No, dubbing can't convey the same message and even if it does it won't be exactly the same message. It will be a little bit different.

- **DIALOGUE LIST**

**N- Do you usually get a dialogue list together with the film script?**



Sometimes we receive the programmes with script (dialogue list) and sometimes we don't receive scripts (in this case we translate the program by listening to the dialogue from the CD). Sometimes the scripts have some useful information (like the location of the scene, the meaning of some difficult or slang words, description of the segments... etc.), and sometimes the scripts have the dialogue list only (the words spoken by the actors only) without any additional information or explanation.

- **TRANSLATION THEORY**

**A- Do you rely on a particular translation theory? What is it?**

I can only say that any literally translation will mean the failure of any film. So, the concentration should be on the message that the film wants to deliver rather than the words.

**B- Do you agree that film translation is rather an adaptation than translation?**

Yes, that is right, especially when you subtitle into Arabic but if you are subtitling into a European language, then it is not.

- **DIALECTS**

**C- How can English dialects be subtitled into equivalent Arabic ones and is it important to do so?**

No, it is not possible to subtitle dialects however this is important to the message of the film.

**D- Since the only language used in subtitles is MSA, how does this affect the message of a film? If there is any loss in message, how can this loss be compensated?**

I do not think that the message of ST will be affected. But if it will, then the sound track and the moving image will complete the picture.

- **EUPHEMISM**

**E- To what extent does euphemizing swearing and taboo words tend to affect the messages of the translated films?**

Sometimes, swearing is not a major factor in the film and it is used only to show that someone is angry for a reason, but in times it may affect the message of the film. But in general, it does not affect the message of the film.

**F- Taking into consideration the fact that we are living the age of globalization, is it really important to euphemize?**

We use euphemism because the audience in the Arab world will not tolerate swearing. The Western culture is different from the Eastern one. We have also to take into consideration children and teenagers. Parents would not want their children to learn swear words, especially if the swear words are strong.

- **HUMOUR**

**G- Is the translated humour able to have the same effect that the original text has on the audience and how?**

It is impossible for the translated humour to have the same effect of that of the original humour due to cultural differences. The English humour relies for a good deal on sexual connotations, something that does not suit the Arab culture. For instance, when *Friends* is subtitled into Arabic, it loses much of its humour. Moreover, what makes me laugh may not make an English laugh.

**H- To what extent can the translator be free in order to deliver the message? In other words, which has the priority, translation or humour and why?**

It depends. If the film is subtitled for Saudi Arabia, then the subtitler is completely restricted. On the other hand, if the same film is subtitled for the Lebanese market, then the subtitler has more freedom to express the humour of the ST.

**I- Which can better express the humour of the TT, standard or colloquial Arabic?**

Colloquial is much better in this regard and can elicit more laughter than standard Arabic.

**J- Depending on your experience, are puns translatable into Arabic?**

Puns have to do with culture. If an equivalent is not found then they are translated literally doing our best to bring it closer to the original. Moreover, and frankly speaking, how can we find an equivalent to puns when the film has to be translated in 24 hours? This can only be done by a professional translator.

- **DUBBING**

**K- Can dubbing solve the problem of subtitling English dialects by dubbing those dialects into colloquial Arabic such as Egyptian, for example?**

It depends on where the client wants to show the film. For example, if a film is dubbed into Lebanese for the Lebanese market, then I think that it will be a hit and if you dub a film into Syrian for the Syrian market then it will also be a hit and so on. Colloquial is more able than standard to express the humour of the ST. But what has to be considered here is that dubbing into dialects may not be commercially practical.

**L- Taking into consideration that in dubbing the audience cannot compare between the two texts, the source and the target, can dubbing do a better job with regard to censorship?**

Generally speaking, in dubbing a lot of the original message will be lost. I believe that dubbing takes away 30% of the message of the film due to the aesthetical reasons such as those related to character synchrony. But yes, in dubbing you hide whatever you want and the audience would not know.

**M- Is dubbing into colloquial Arabic better able than subtitling into MSA to successfully transfer the humour of English films?**

Dubbing will not actually solve the problem of humour. The problem of humour is in finding an equivalent joke whether in dubbing or subtitling.

- **DIALOGUE LIST**

**N- Do you usually get a dialogue list together with the film script?**

Not always.

## Appendix (F): Contacts of subtitling and dubbing companies

Company	Location	Contact details	Some of the films they translated
Gulf Film	Dubai	Al-Khabissi Rd. Deira P.O Box 81956 Dubai Tel: + 971 (0) 4 2623964 Fax: + 971 (0) 4 2694476 Email: infor@gulffilm.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Iron Man (2008)</li> <li>- Speed Racer (2008)</li> <li>- Son of Rambow (2007)</li> <li>- Mamma Mia (2008)</li> <li>- Step up 2 (2008)</li> <li>- The Bank Job (2008)</li> </ul>
Silver Screen Subtitling Limited (SSS)	England	Weller, Tenison House, 45 Tweedy Road, Bromley, BR1 3NF KENT Tel: +44 1322 271 194 Fax: +44 1322 271 194 Email: ahmad@khuddro.fsnet.co.uk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The Haunted (1991)</li> <li>- Bridgit Jones Diary (2001)</li> <li>- The Italian Job (2003)</li> <li>- Pride &amp; Prejudice (2005)</li> <li>- Brother Bear (2003)</li> <li>- Beauty and the Beast (1991)</li> </ul>

VSI International	England	Aradco House 132 Cleveland Street London W1T 6AB Tel: + 44 (0) 20 76927700 Email: info@vsi.tv	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scary Movie 4 (2006)</li> <li>- Parenthood (1989)</li> <li>- American Dreamz (2006)</li> <li>- CB4 (1993)</li> <li>- Today You Die (2005)</li> <li>- Bandidas (2006)</li> </ul>
Tanweer Enlightenment	Syria	Free Zone Damascus Syria Tel: + 963 (0) 11 2117041 Fax: + 963 (0) 11 88279120 Email: omarkaadi@gmail.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final Descent (1997)</li> <li>- Hidden Agenda (1990)</li> <li>- Money For Nothing (1993)</li> <li>- I'll Be Home For Christmas (1998)</li> <li>- Mr, Wrong (1996)</li> </ul>
Pro Subtitling	Lebanon	Mkallas Roundabout John Stephan Bldg 2ed Floor Te: + 961 (0) 1 483535 Fax: + 961 (0) 1 492895 Email: info@prosubtitling.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Rambo (2008)</li> <li>- Che (2008)</li> <li>- Slumdog Millionaire (2008)</li> <li>- Warlords (2008)</li> <li>- Christina Barcelona (2008)</li> <li>- King of California (2007)</li> </ul>
Al- Anwar DVD Centre	Syria	Al-Jamilieh Aleppo Syria Tel: + 963 (0) 21 2211002 Website: www.alanwardvd.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- London to Brighton (2006)</li> <li>- Educating Rita (1983)</li> <li>- Friends (1994-2004)</li> <li>- Casino Royale (2006)</li> <li>- This is England (2006)</li> </ul>

**Appendix (G): Swear words in the subtitled version of *CON AIR*.**

Swear and taboo words	Number of times occurred	Number of times omitted	Number of times translated	Translation(s)
1- S***	33	8	25	- حماقة/ أحمق/ هُراء) : foolishness/fool). - لعين/ اللعنة) : damn/damned) - قذارة/ وسخ) : rubbish ) - مشاكل) : troubles) - تعطل) : broke)
- S***ters	1	0	1	- ملاعين) : damned)
- S*** eating pecker head	1	0	1	- ابن الكلب) : son of dog)
- Deadly s***	1	0	1	- لعين) : damned)
- Horse s***	1	1	0	-
- Chicken s***	1	0	1	- ملاعين) : damned)
- Holy s***	1	0	1	- اللعنة) : damn)
- Dirty crack head s***	1	1	0	-
- Stinking piece of s***/piece of s***	2	0	2	- ملاعين/ ننته) : damned/stinking)
2- Son of a b****/b****	7	5	2	- مغفل) : idiot)

				- (sons of the dog : أولاد الكلب)
3- Crackhead	2	1	1	- (fool : أحمق)
4- Pussies	1	0	1	- (fools : حمقى)
5- A**es/ wisea**/ a**holes	3	1	2	- (beggars : متسكعين) - (fools : حمقى)
6- Punk	3	0	3	- (fool : أحمق)
7- Pig(s)/ piggy	7	0	7	- (pig : خنزير)
8- P***ed off/ p***/ P***ing his pants	4	1	3	- (urinate : يتبول) - (give you up : استغنوا عنك)
9- Bastard	1	0	1	- (fool : م غفل)
10- Naked party freaks/dirty naked freaks.	2	0	2	- (Nice thing : أمر رائع) - (temporary pleasures : نزوات عابرة)
11- Hell	9	1	8	- (for hell's sake : بحق الجحيم)
12- D*** head/d***/ p**** - If your d*** comes out of your pants.	4	1	3	- (fool : أحمق) - (you jump out of your pants : قفزت من ملابسك الداخلية)
13- F***er	3	1	2	- (damned : ملاعين)



- Motherf***er/ motherf***ing	3	1	2	- (ملاعين : damned)
- F*** (v) (someone/something)	7	1	6	- (تبا : damn) - (خُدعنا : tricked)
- F*** off	2	1	1	- (ابتعد عن وجهي : get off my face)
- F*** (n): what/who/shut/the f***...	14	5	9	- (اخرس/اللعين/ حق الجحيم : shut up/for hell's sake/damn)
- F***ing (adj)	10	2	8	- (أحمق : crap) - (مدهش : amazing) - (لعين : damned) - (أعيب : mess up)
- Unf***ed (It should be...)	1	0	1	- (لا يُقضى على : unfinished)
14- Goddamn	5	0	5	- (اللعين : damned)
- Damn	8	2	6	- (اللعة/ لعين : damn/ damned)
15- Christ in a cartoon	1	0	1	
- The weeping mama of Christ	1	0	1	- (بنت الرئيس : The daughter of the president)
- Christ!/ Jesus Christ/ Jesus	3	0	3	- (تبا/ يا إلهي : damn/ Oh, my God)
<b>Numbers in total</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>110</b>	

## Appendix (H): Swear words in *London to Brighton*.

Swear and taboo words	Number of times occurred	Number of times omitted	Number of times translated	Examples of translations in original translation	Examples of new added swear words in modified version
1- F***ing (adj)	102	87	15	- (الملاعين: Damned) - (الحقير: Villain) - (بحق الجحيم: For hell's sake) - (الأحمق: Fool) - (جداً: Very) - (اللعة: Damn)	- (ويحك: Vow on you) - (تياً: May evil befalls) - (هراء: idle talk) - (سافل: mean) - (وسخ: dirty) - (تافه: silly)
- F*** off (vp)	14	9	5	- (ابتعد: Go away) - (هلي: Come on) - (اللعة: Damn)	- (وغد: scoundrel) - (غبي: stupid)
- F*** (v)	5	0	5	- (تسكع: To hang out with) - (ضاجع: To lie in bed with)	- (ينام مع: sleep with)
- F*** up (vp)	4	3	1	- (يفسد: To mess up/ To spoil)	
- F*** (n)	4	2	2	- (اللعة: Damn/ الجحيم: Hell)	

2-	C***	11	2	9	- (عاهرة: Prostitute) - (مجنون: Crazy) - (حقير: Villain)	- (نذل: vile) - (منحط: low)
3-	S*** (n)	6	0	6	- (بشع: Ugly) - (مقرف: Disgusting) - (خطر: Danger) - (لعنة: Curse/ Damn)	- (قذر: Filthy)
-	S***hole				- (حقير: Villain)	
4-	P*** (v)	1	0	1	- (يذهب الى الحمام: Go to bathroom)	
-	P***ed (adj)	2	0	2	- (منزعج: Upset)	
-	P*** (n)	1	0	1	- (مخادع: Cunning)	
5-	A**hole	1	1	0		
6-	Bloody	2	2	0		- (سحقاً: to hell with...)
7-	Arse	1	1	0		
8-	B****	1	0	0		
<b>Numbers in total</b>		<b>154</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>47</b>		

## Appendix (I): *Friends*: Jokes chosen for experiment (III)

### A- Stage (I): Season 8. Episode 5: 'The One with Rachel's Date' (2001)

1- **Monica:** Uh, Tim? This is Phoebe. Phoebe, this is Tim, my new sous chef.

**Phoebe:** (to Tim) Oh, so you're Monica' boss?

**Tim:** Actually, she's my boss. Sous is French for under.

**Phoebe:** Oh, I sous stand.<sup>35</sup>

...

**Phoebe:** Would you say your Pesto is the besto?

**Tim:** I don't know, but I would say it's pretty goodo.

Original translation	Modified translation
<p><b>مونیکا:</b> (تيم) أقدم لك (فبيي)</p> <p>(فبيي) هذا (تيم)، مساعد رئيس الطهاة.</p> <p><b>فبيي:</b> إذا أنت مدير (مونیکا)؟</p> <p><b>تيم:</b> بالأحرى هي مديرتي</p> <p>باللغة الفرنسية تعني الكلمة "مساعد"</p> <p><b>فبيي:</b> لقد ساعدتني و فهمت.</p> <p>...</p> <p><b>فبيي:</b> هل تقول أن "البيستو" هي الأفضل؟</p> <p><b>تيم:</b> لا أعرف، لكنني أقول أنها جيدة.</p>	<p><b>مونیکا:</b> (تيم) أقدم لك (فبيي)</p> <p>(فبيي) هذا (تيم)، مساعد رئيس الطهاة.</p> <p><b>فبيي:</b> إذا أنت مدير (مونیکا)؟</p> <p><b>تيم:</b> بالأحرى هي مديرتي</p> <p>باللغة الفرنسية 'سو' تعني "مساعد"</p> <p><b>فبيي:</b> لقد ساعدتني و فهمت.</p> <p>...</p> <p><b>فبيي:</b> هل تقول أن "البيستو" هي بروننتو؟</p> <p><b>تيم:</b> لا أعرف، لكنني أقول أنها الأحسننتو.</p>
<p><b>Monica:</b> Uh, Tim? This is Phoebe.</p> <p>Phoebe, this is Tim, my new sous chef.</p> <p><b>Phoebe:</b> (to Tim) Oh, so you're Monica' boss?</p> <p><b>Tim:</b> Actually, she's my boss. The word</p>	<p><b>Monica:</b> Uh, Tim? This is Phoebe.</p> <p>Phoebe, this is Tim, my new sous chef.</p> <p><b>Phoebe:</b> (to Tim) Oh, so you're Monica' boss?</p> <p><b>Tim:</b> Actually, she's my boss. Sous is</p>

<sup>35</sup> Another play on words that the subtitler succeeded to handle somehow. He translated the French word 'sous' as 'مساعد' or 'assistant' rather than 'under' as it should be. The word assist gets the first joke: 'I sous stand' which he translated as 'You assisted me to understand' which is not bad. However, and when Phoebe uses the same word in another pun (4) 'I can't wait to be sousneath him', the subtitler could not use the word 'assistant' to interpret the joke. He simply translated it as 'I can't wait to see him' instead of 'I can't wait to be his assistant', 'لا أستطيع الإنتظار حتى أصبح مساعدته', which preserves the word 'sous' or assistant as well as the humour.

is French for assistant.	French for assistant.
<b>Phoebe:</b> Oh, you assisted me to understand.	<b>Phoebe:</b> Oh, you assisted me to understand.
...	...
<b>Phoebe:</b> Would you say your Pesto is the best? <sup>36</sup>	<b>Phoebe:</b> Would you say your Pesto is pronto?
<b>Tim:</b> I don't know, but I would say it's pretty good.	<b>Tim:</b> I don't know, but I would say it's the besto

- 2- **Phoebe:** Uh, Monica! Oh, my God! I had the best time  
With Tim last night. He's so sweet.  
Oh, I can't wait to get sousneath him.

Original Translation	Modified translation
<p>فبيبي: مونيك! يا إلهي! أمضيت وقتاً ممتعاً للغاية مع (تيم) ليلة أمس فهو لطيف فعلاً. أنتظر رؤيته مجدداً بفارغ الصبر.</p>	<p>فبيبي: مونيك! يا إلهي! أمضيت وقتاً ممتعاً للغاية مع (تيم) ليلة أمس فهو لطيف فعلاً. لا أستطيع الإنتظار حتى أصبح مساعدته.</p>
<p><b>Phoebe:</b> Uh, Monica! Oh, my God! I had the best time with Tim last night. He's so sweet. Oh, I can't wait to see him again.</p>	<p><b>Phoebe:</b> Uh, Monica! Oh, my God! I had the best time with Tim last night. He's so sweet. Oh, I can't wait to become his assistant.<sup>37</sup></p>

<sup>36</sup> 'Your Pesto is the besto' is translated as 'Your Pesto is the best'. Another option could be 'Your Pesto is pronto'. 'Pronto' (برونتو) is an Italian word which is popular in the Arab world and which means 'Great' or 'fantastic' and it will rhyme with Pesto, too.

<sup>37</sup> This is another play on words using 'sous'. Since the word was translated as 'assistant' before, then it would be logical to keep it. This sentence 'I cannot wait to become his assistant' will be interpreted differently by the Arab audience. One of these interpretations is that Phoebe cannot wait to become his wife. The original translation on the other side chose 'see' for 'sousneath', something that did not sound funny.

- 3- **Rachel:** (to Kash: an actor) Y' know, Joey thinks I'm some kind of a soap opera nut- which I'm not! I'm not.

Original translation	Modified translation
<p>راشيل: جوي يظنني مهووسة بالمسلسلات التلفزيونية الدرامية... وهذا غير صحيح فعلاً.</p>	<p>راشيل: جوي يظنني مهووسة بالمسلسلات التلفزيونية الدرامية... وأنا كذلك فعلاً... أنا كذلك</p>
<p><b>Rachel:</b> Joey thinks I'm some kind of a soap opera nut- which I'm not, indeed.<sup>38</sup></p>	<p><b>Rachel:</b> Joey thinks I'm some kind of a soap opera nut- which I am, indeed. I am.</p>

- 4- **Ross:** (to Chandler) Hey, sorry I kept you waiting so long.

**Chandler:** Hey, that's okay. So, where do you want to go?

**Ross:** Oh, I think you know where I want to go.

**Chandler:** The Hard Rock Café.

**Ross:** Yeah.

**Chandler:** Again?

**Ross:** Yeah, I'm telling you, I like the food.

**Chandler:** You like 'Purple Rain' display<sup>39</sup>!

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<sup>38</sup> Once again the audience feels the irrelevance between the subtitles, the actors' face expressions and the laughter they hear. Rachel plays on words claiming that she is not soap opera nut but in fact she means the opposite. So, in order to make the subtitles more relevant and funnier, it can be translated as: 'Joey thinks that I'm a soap opera nut- which I am indeed, I am indeed', 'جوي يظنني مهووسة بالمسلسلات التلفزيونية... وأنا كذلك فعلاً... أنا كذلك'.

<sup>39</sup> Neither The Hard Rock Café nor the Purple Rain displays are known to the Arab audience, let alone the fact that many people do not even know what hard rock is. Moreover, a Café in the Arab culture is a place where people go to drink tea or coffee and sometime play cards. As we can see below, the original translation does not clarify the nature of the café or of the display, the modified translation took this into consideration.

Original translation	Modified translation
<p>روس: آسف لأنني جعلتك تنتظر لفترة طويلة</p> <p>تشاندلر: لا عليك. أين تريد الذهاب؟</p> <p>روس: أظنك تعرف أين أريد الذهاب.</p> <p>تشاندلر: مقهى "هارد روك"؟ روس: أجل.</p> <p>تشاندلر: مجدداً؟ روس: أجل.</p> <p>روس: صدقني أنا أستسيغ الطعام هناك.</p> <p>تشاندلر: بل أنت تحب عرض (بوربل رايين).</p>	<p>روس: آسف لأنني جعلتك تنتظر لفترة طويلة</p> <p>تشاندلر: لا عليك. أين تريد الذهاب؟</p> <p>روس: أظنك تعرف أين أريد الذهاب.</p> <p>تشاندلر: مقهى "الموسيقى الصاخبة"؟ روس: أجل.</p> <p>تشاندلر: مجدداً؟ روس: أجل.</p> <p>روس: صدقني أنا أستسيغ الطعام هناك.</p> <p>تشاندلر: بل أنت تحب عرض (بوربل رايين) الراقص.</p>
<p><b>Ross:</b> (to Chandler) Hey, sorry I kept you waiting so long.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> Hey, that's okay. So, where do you want to go?</p> <p><b>Ross:</b> Oh, I think you know where I want to go.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> The Hard Rock Café.</p> <p><b>Ross:</b> Yeah.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> Again?</p> <p><b>Ross:</b> Yeah, I'm telling you, I like the food.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> You like 'Purple Rain' display!</p>	<p><b>Ross:</b> (to Chandler) Hey, sorry I kept you waiting so long.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> Hey, that's okay. So, where do you want to go?</p> <p><b>Ross:</b> Oh, I think you know where I want to go.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> The Hard Music Café.</p> <p><b>Ross:</b> Yeah.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> Again?</p> <p><b>Ross:</b> Yeah, I'm telling you, I like the food.</p> <p><b>Chandler:</b> You like dancing 'Purple Rain' display!</p>

- 5- **Rachel:** (to Joey, before she went out to a date with Kash) Hey, what do you think is a better excuse for why I'm not drinking on this date tonight.

Umm, I'm a recovering alcoholic.  
 I'm a Mormon<sup>40</sup>,  
 or I got so hammered last night I'm still a little drunk?

Original translation	Modified translation
<p>راشيل: ما هو أفضل عذر لعدم تناول الشراب الليلة في موعدا؟</p> <p>تتعافى أنا مدمنة كحول</p> <p>أو أنا مورمونية؟</p> <p>أو شربت كثيراً ليلة البارحة</p> <p>الى درجة أنني لا زلت ثملة؟</p>	<p>راشيل: ما هو أفضل عذر لعدم تناول الشراب الليلة؟</p> <p>أنا مدمنة كحول تتعافى؟</p> <p>ديني لا يسمح؟</p> <p>أو شربت كثيراً ليلة البارحة</p> <p>الى درجة أنني لا زلت ثملة؟</p>
<p><b>Rachel:</b> Hey, what do you think is a better excuse for why I'm not drinking on this date tonight.</p> <p>Umm, I'm a recovering alcoholic?          I'm a Mormon?</p> <p>Or I got so hammered last night          I'm still a little drunk?</p>	<p><b>Rachel:</b> Hey, what do you think is a better excuse for why I'm not drinking tonight.</p> <p>Umm, I'm a recovering alcoholic?          My religion does not permit?</p> <p>Or I got so hammered last night          I'm still a little drunk?</p>

**B- Stage (II): Season 8. Episode 16: 'The One Where Joey Tells Rachel'**  
**(2002)**

1- **Joey:** (to Rachel, in a restaurant) Is it hot in here?  
**Rachel:** No. Not for me, but why don't you take off your sweater?

<sup>40</sup> The Mormons are not known in the Arab countries. The original translation does not clarify what Mormon is whereas the second does.



**Joey:** I would, but this is a nice place and my T-shirt  
Has a picture of Calvin doing Hobbs.

Original translation	Modified translation
<p><b>جوي:</b> هل الجو حار هنا؟  <b>راشيل:</b> لا، ليس بالنسبة لي،  لكن لم لا تخلع كنزتك؟  <b>جوي:</b> كنت لأفعل لكنه مكان فخم  و على القميص صورة (كالفن) و (هوبس)  <b>راشيل:</b> رباه! حقاً؟ أيمكنني رؤيتها؟  <b>جوي:</b> أجل بالطبع.  <b>راشيل:</b> لا أظن أن (هوبس) سيحب هذا كثيراً</p>	<p><b>جوي:</b> هل الجو حار هنا؟  <b>راشيل:</b> لا، ليس بالنسبة لي،  لكن لم لا تخلع كنزتك؟  <b>جوي:</b> كنت لأفعل لكنه مكان فخم  و على القميص صورة (كالفن) يبول على (هوبس)  <b>راشيل:</b> رباه! حقاً؟ أيمكنني رؤيتها؟  <b>جوي:</b> أجل بالطبع.  <b>راشيل:</b> لا أظن أن (هوبس) سيحب هذا كثيراً.</p>
<p><b>Joey:</b> (to Rachel, in a restaurant) Is it hot in here?  <b>Rachel:</b> No. Not for me, but why don't you take off your sweater?  <b>Joey:</b> I would, but this is a nice place and my T-shirt Has a picture of Calvin and Hobbs.<sup>41</sup>  <b>Rachel:</b> Oh, my God! Really? Can I see it?  <b>Joey:</b> Yea, sure.  <b>Rachel:</b> Huh, wow, I wouldn't think Hobbs would like that so much.</p>	<p><b>Joey:</b> (to Rachel, in a restaurant) Is it hot in here?  <b>Rachel:</b> No. Not for me, but why don't you take off your sweater?  <b>Joey:</b> I would, but this is a nice place and my T-shirt Has a picture of Calvin peeing on Hobbs.  <b>Rachel:</b> Oh, my God! Really? Can I see it?  <b>Joey:</b> Yea, sure.  <b>Rachel:</b> Huh, wow, I wouldn't think Hobbs would like that so much.</p>

<sup>41</sup> Similar to 'would do her', 'Calvin doing Hobbs' is again euphemised and even omitted and as a result omitting the humour. If the subtitle has substituted it with 'Calvin urinating on Hobbs', 'كالفين يبول على هوبس', or 'Calvin vomiting on Hobbs', 'كالفين يقيئ على هوبس', then it, and the joke that follows: 'I would not think Hobbs would like that so much' would make more sense in terms of humour.

2- Joey and Rachel are still at the restaurant and they are the last ones. Two waiters are waiting for them to finish hugging. Meanwhile, this conversation between the waiters takes place:

**Waiter 2:** What's the matter with them?

**Waiter:** I don't know. I think may be one of them is dying.

I kinda hope it's the girl.

The guy is really cute.

Original translation	Modified translation
<p>النادل 2: ما خطبهما؟ النادل 1: لا أدري، أظن أن أحدهما يحتضر أمل أن تكون المرأة الرجل ظريف فعلاً.</p>	<p>النادل 2: ما خطبهما؟ النادل 1: لا أدري، أظن أن أحدهما يحتضر أمل أن تكون المرأة فأنا حقاً مغرم بالرجل.</p>
<p><b>Waiter 2:</b> What's the matter with them? <b>Waiter:</b> I don't know. I think may be one of them is dying. I kinda hope it's the girl. The guy is really cute.</p>	<p><b>Waiter 2:</b> What's the matter with them? <b>Waiter:</b> I don't know. I think may be one of them is dying. I kinda hope it's the girl. I really fancy the guy.</p>

### C- Stage (III): Season 9. Episode 12: 'The One with Phoebe's Rats' (2003)

1- **Rachel:** (speaking to her colleague Gavin who is looking at the beautiful secretary)

I'm just happy...I'm sorry, obviously Heather's a\*\* has something more important to say,  
so I'll just wait till it's finished.

**Gavin:** I was looking at the skirt. Or was it pants?

I did not really see what happened below the a\*\* area.

**Rachel:** If you like looking at butts so much  
why don't you just go look at a mirror?

Original translation	Modified translation
<p>راشيل: أنا مسرورة... المعذرة؟ يبدو أن لدى قوام (هيدر) أشياء أهم تقولها لذلك سأنتظر حتى تنتهي. كيفن: كنت أنظر الى تنورتها. أم هل كان سروالاً؟ لم أر ما حصل تحت القوام. راشيل: ان كنت تحب النظر الى القوام هكذا لم لا تذهب و تنتظر في المرأة؟</p>	<p>راشيل: أنا مسرورة... المعذرة؟ يبدو أن لدى مؤخرة (هيدر) أشياء أهم تقولها لذلك سأنتظر حتى تنتهي. كيفن: كنت أنظر الى تنورتها. أم هل كان سروالاً؟ لم أر ما حصل تحت المؤخرة. لم راشيل: ان كنت تحب النظر الى المؤخرة هكذا لا تذهب و تنتظر في المرأة؟</p>
<p><b>Rachel:</b> I'm just happy...I'm sorry, obviously Heather's figure has something more important to say, so I'll just wait till it's finished. <b>Gavin:</b> I was looking at the skirt. Or was it pants? I did not really see what happened below her figure. <b>Rachel:</b> If you like looking at figures so much why don't you Just go look at a mirror?<sup>42</sup></p>	<p><b>Rachel:</b> I'm just happy...I'm sorry, obviously Heather's back has something more important to say, so I'll just wait till it's finished. <b>Gavin:</b> I was looking at the skirt. Or was it pants? I did not really see what happened below her back. <b>Rachel:</b> If you like looking at the back<sup>43</sup> so much why don't you Just go look at a mirror?</p>

<sup>42</sup> In this three-part joke, the word a\*\* occurred twice and the word butt occurred one. The subtitler replaced all these words with 'قوام' which caused the loss of the humour.

<sup>43</sup> The word 'back' or 'مؤخرة', is a euphemised word for 'butt' or 'a\*\*' but a polite one that can easily be used in this context to make the conversation and the joke meaningful.

## Appendix (J): Swear words in the dubbed version of *CON AIR*

Swear and taboo words	Number of times occurred	Number of times omitted	Number of times translated	Translation(s)
1- S***	33	23	10	1- (ريحه : smell). 2- (بلاوي : troubles) 3- (اخرس : shut up) 4- (زباله : rubbish )- (3) 5- (زفت : crap) 6- (مصيبه : trouble) 7- (تعطل : broke) 8- (مغل : idiot)
- S***ters	1	0	1	- (جرايع : rats)
- S*** eating pecker head	1	0	1	- (ابن الكلب : son of dog)
- Deadly s***	1	1	0	-
- Horse s***	1	0	1	- (تخريف : hallucination)
- Chicken s***	1	0	1	- (كلب الست : the lady's dog)
- Holy s***	1	0	1	- (نيله : bad)
- Dirty crack head s***	1	0	1	- (زباله : rubbish)
- Stinking piece of s***/piece of s***	2	1	1	- (زفته منيله : stinking and unpleasant )

2-	Son of a b****/b****	7	5	2	- (مغفل : idiot) - (أولاد الكلب : sons of the dog)
3-	Crackhead	2	0	2	- (زبالة : rubbish)
4-	Pussies	1	0	1	- (أرانب : rabbits)
5-	A**es/ wisea**/ a**holes	3	1	2	- (مجرمين : criminals) - (الشله : friends)
6-	Punk	3	1	2	- (مخادع/غشاش : cheater)
7-	Pig/ piggy	7	3	4	- (جاموس : female cow) - (يا حلاوه : how sweet (sarcastic)) - (زفت : crap) - (خنزير : pig)
8-	P***ed off/p*** - P***ing his pants	3	2	1	- (بيترعش زي الفرخة الداخنة : shivering like an unconscious chicken)
9-	Bastard	1	0	1	- (مغفل : fool)
10-	Naked party freaks/dirty naked freaks.	2	0	2	- (حلوات ستات : beautiful ladies)
11-	Hell	9	8	1	- (تجننت : have you become crazy)
12-	D*** head/d***/ p**** - If your d*** comes out of your pants.	4	2	2	- (مجرمين : criminals) - (لو ريتلت.. <sup>44</sup> )

<sup>44</sup> The translator means by slobber that if the prisoner feels hot and wants to sleep with the girl. This is the common word used in Egypt to euphemize such words.

13-	F***er	3	0	3	- (لمامة/ زبالة : rubbish) - (ظريف : nice)
-	Motherf***er/ motherf***ing	3	3	0	
-	F*** (v) (someone/something)	7	3	4	- (انت الصادق : you are honest <sup>45</sup> ) - (شقي : miserable) - (يقتل : kill) - (يمزح مع : joke with)
-	F*** off	2	0	2	- (ابعد عن وجهي : get off my face)
-	F*** (n): what/who/shut/the f***...	14	10	4	- (اخرس/اتنيل/ظريف : shut up/funny)
-	F***ing (adj)	10	9	1	- (زفت : crap)
-	Unf***ed (It should be...)	1	0	1	- (يُحل : sorted/solved)
14-	Goddamn	5	4	1	- (بطل بقي : stop it)
-	Damn	8	8	0	
15-	Christ in a cartoon	1	0	1	- (دا ديك مسعور : This is a mad crock)
-	The weeping mama of Christ	1	0	1	- (بنت الرئيس : The daughter of the president)
-	Christ!/ Jesus Christ/ Jesus	3	2	1	- (يا نهار أسود : what a bad day)
<b>Numbers in total</b>		<b>143</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>57</b>	-

<sup>45</sup> 'You are honest is an expression used to politely correct a wrong information that someone said. Here, it is also used for this purpose but in a sarcastic way.